NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

DISCIPLESHIP SERIES 1

Sin & Repentance
Salvation
Holy Spirit and Water Baptism
The Final Resurrection & Eternity
Growing in Christ

MWENDWA MBAABU

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

DISCIPLESHIP SERIES 1

Sin & Repentance

Salvation

Holy Spirit & Water Baptism

The Final Resurrection & Eternity

Growing In Christ

Mwendwa Mbaabu

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST

Freely Given – Public Domain Notice

This work is released into the public domain.

You are free to copy, share, distribute, translate, adapt, and reproduce this book in whole or in part, for any purpose, without permission.

Moral Request
This book was written to be freely given, not sold.
Selling this work or using it for profit goes against the author's intent and the spirit in which it was shared (Matthew 10:8).

First Edition, 2025

Scripture Quotations:
Scripture quotations are primarily taken from the King James Version (KJV), the New King James Version (NKJV), and the Berean Standard Bible (BSB).
Other translations may occasionally be used.

NKJV: Scripture taken from the *New King James Version*®.
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

BSB and KJV: Public domain.

Inquiries:
Mwendwa Mbaabu
P.O. Box 20964-00202
Nairobi, Kenya
www.mwendwambaabu.com

Dedication

To you reading this book, who has the desire to know the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Savior of the world, who died for the sins of the world that we may have eternal life and be reconciled to God our Father. I pray this book will be a blessing to you and enrich your faith in immense ways through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Get a Bible and prayerfully study this book searching the scriptures quoted therein to confirm that everything written is true.

Feel free to use and share this book with others as an evangelism tool or as a guide for personal or group study.

Table of Contents

Dedication 4
Introduction 6
How to Be Born Again and Have Eternal Life 7
Importance of Water Baptism for the Believer 16
How to Receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit 21
The Partnership of the Godhead in Salvation of Souls 27
True Salvation Is Being Born Again (of God) 30
What Is the (True) Gospel Preached by the Lord Jesus? 34
The Children of God vs. Children of the Devil 36
The Cost of Discipleship—Have You Counted the Cost? 41
Prepare to Meet Your God 44
All is Vanity 47
Jesus Came to Fulfil the Law-What Does It Mean? 50
You Are Eternal. Where Shall You Spend Eternity? 55
The Great Hope of the Resurrection: 7 Glorious Truths! 59
Are You Ready for God's Final Judgment? 64
Return Backsliders! Jesus is Calling You! 66
Genuine Repentance and Restitution Are Key to Total Deliverance 70
Satan Is a Legalist—Sin Gives Him Legal Rights 78
The Glorious Liberty of the Children of God 82
Growing as a Disciple of Jesus Christ 85
7 Keys to Spiritual Growth from the Life of Jesus 88
Bible Illiteracy Is Not Acceptable for Christians 96
20 Powerful Benefits of Studying the Word of God 98
How to Study the Bible – 12 Effective Ways 107
How to Pray: 12 Lessons from the Lord's Prayer 115
14 Conditions of Answered Prayer 127
8 Qualities for Spiritual Growth and Fruitfulness (2 Peter 1:5-11) 136
Who is the Bride of Christ? 7 Characteristics 141
7 Keys to Victory over the Devil's Attacks 146
Take Heed to the Ministry Which You Have Received 149
Go and Tell Others What He has Done! 153
He Who Endures to the End Shall Be Saved 156
About the Author 158

Introduction

All human beings are creations of God, but not all are children of God. We only become children of God by repenting and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. It is by believing in his sacrifice of himself on the cross for our sins and salvation and believing in the reconciliation he alone provides with God the Father that we become born again or saved.

Without Jesus, we are not children of God, however good we think we are. The Bible says those who are not in Christ are the children of the devil. This is by default because we are all born sinners and without a relationship with Christ. We do the work of the devil, which is sin, when we are not born again, because only Jesus can forgive sins and change our sinful nature into his righteous nature.

We should never deceive ourselves that God is our Father if we do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ as our Lord. Until God gives us new birth by his Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ, we are not his children.

The privilege of sonship is given to those who have turned away from their old life of sin and run to the Lord Jesus for salvation and new life. Are you a child of God? You can be today.

In this book, we will examine what it means to be saved (born again), who Jesus Christ is, what he did on the cross, why it is good news for humanity, and why we all need a savior. We will also look at important essentials for the new believer, such as repentance, water baptism, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and various ways you can grow in your faith in Christ Jesus.

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you used to walk when you conformed to the ways of this world and of the ***ruler of the power of the air*** *(the devil), the spirit who is now at work in the* ***sons of disobedience****. **All of us** also lived among them at one time, fulfilling the cravings of our flesh and indulging its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we* ***were by nature children of wrath****. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might display the surpassing riches of His grace, demonstrated by His kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance as our way of life." Ephesians 2:1-10*

How to Be Born Again and Have Eternal Life

In this article, we will examine what it means to be saved or born again, who Jesus Christ is, what he did on the cross, why it is good news for humanity, and why we all need a savior.

Get a Bible and prayerfully read the verses in the article to see what Jesus did for you on the cross because of his great love. Be reconciled with God today!

You must be born again.

Do you have peace with God? Do you know where you will spend eternity when you leave this world? This is a decision that every person should give serious thought to. Eternity beckons to every one of us. As sure as the sun rises in the east, each of us shall leave this world one day and face eternity in one of two places. We shall either spend our eternity with God in heaven or be separated from him forever in hell. This decision is one every single one of us has to make while we are alive.

God is our creator, and we cannot bypass him and ignore him when it comes to our eternal destinies. He has given us the chance to know him and make things right with him while we are alive; after death, it will be too late.

Jesus told Nicodemus, a religious man, "***Tr*uly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God**." Nicodemus said to him, "**How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born***?*" (*John 3:3-4*). It did not make sense logically to Nicodemus, yet that is the path to salvation. Jesus responded, "**That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit"** (*John 3:6)***.** To be born again is to be born of the Spirit of God.

Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, wrote, *"Born once—die twice; born twice—die once.*" This great spiritual truth is the key to eternal life. Our natural birth cannot save us since we are born into sin. To be reconciled to God and have eternal life, we must be born a second time (spiritually), and then we shall only die once (physically). Those who are only born once will die twice (physically and spiritually). Jesus Christ gives us spiritual rebirth. *You must be born again*.

Human beings are born sinners.

All men are sinners. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. We are all born with a sinful nature because we are descendants of Adam and Eve, the first humans. Adam and Eve listened to Satan in the Garden of Eden and sinned against God. They did this by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which led to their nature being corrupted and becoming sinners (*read Genesis 3)*. This act of rebellion and disobedience made the entire human race sinners.

"Sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, so also death was passed on to all men, because all sinned." Romans 5:12

God desires a relationship with us and for us to be his children. However, our sins separate us from God. "*But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you*" *(Isaiah 59:2)*. God is a righteous and holy God who hates sin, and therefore, sinners cannot have peace with him or spend eternity with God. Additionally, no one can fulfill God's righteousness and perfect standards by their own effort because we are naturally slaves to sin.

The Bible says, "*All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). As it is written, "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23*

God loves us but hates sin. The **bad news** is that all of us are born sinners, and that means none of us can have peace with God or enter heaven in our natural, sinful state. The **good news** is that God, by his great love and mercy, has provided a way for us to be **born again**, be saved from our sins, sinful nature, and the sentence of sin, have peace with him, and be reconciled to him for all eternity.

That way is Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who came to earth to die in our place to make atonement (payment) for our sins.

Who is Jesus Christ, and what did he do?

Jesus is the only begotten Son of God and is himself God (*John 1:1*). Jesus was God incarnate in the flesh. Born of a virgin mother and without a sinful nature, he lived a sinless life in the body. He then gave himself up out of love to die on the cross for his creation. Jesus bore the sins of the world upon himself as a sacrificial lamb. This was according to God's divine plan and because of

his great love for us. Jesus thus became the perfect sacrifice and ransom for our sins. He is the only sacrifice for sins that is acceptable to God because he is blameless (*read Isaiah 53:6; I Peter 2:24*).

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Romans 5:6

Whoever repents (turns away) from his sins and his old way of life and believes in him and his sacrifice on the cross receives eternal life.

The Bible says that *"God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself"* (*2 Corinthians 5:19*). Jesus on the cross was accursed and forsaken of God (*Galatians 3:13*) and faced the wrath of God that was ours because of our sins (*Isaiah 53:10*). It was an exchange of love. What manner of love is that Jesus shows us, that he took our punishment, though he did no wrong?

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." 1 John 3:1

God gives us the chance to turn to Jesus while we are alive. He does this by presenting opportunities for us to hear the good news of what Jesus did on the cross. If we reject him and die in our sinful state, we are eternally lost and perish in hell. Jesus died to save us from eternal separation from God. He made the way.

"He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18

The Good News (Gospel) of Jesus Christ

The *good news,* called the "*gospel" of Jesus Christ,* is what Jesus accomplished on the cross. It is good news because Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves (freeing us from the power and penalty of sin).

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

The justice of God (*that he must punish sin and the soul that sins must die*) was satisfied by Christ's death for the sins of all who believe in him. As a result, salvation is now available to all (*John 19:30*).

"He who was delivered over because of our wrongdoings and was raised because of our justification." (Romans 4:25).

Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead was evidence of his power over death and hell. Those who believe in him will likewise never die or perish! Jesus, being sinless, was able to overcome sin, death, hell, and the devil and purchase eternal salvation for all who place their trust in him.

"I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hell and of Death." Revelation 1:8

"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." Hebrews 5:9

"Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:14-15

Jesus preached that we must repent (*acknowledge that we are sinners, confess our sins, and turn from our old way of life of enmity with God*) and believe in him. When we believe in him, we become new creatures as his **Holy Spirit** comes to live within us, giving us a new righteous nature (*2 Corinthians 5:17*).

"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

Jesus will come back again one day.

This present world has an expiration date. It has an end, as all temporary things do. Jesus promised while he was on earth that one day he would return. *"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." (John 14:3)*

He will come back, and every eye will see him, including those who have rejected him (*Revelation 1:7*). He will destroy his enemies and reign on earth for 1,000 years. And after that millennial reign, all that ever lived from Adam, great and small, dead and alive, will stand before God in the

great white throne judgment to be judged and give an account for their lives (read Revelation 20:11-15).

Those who rejected Jesus and lived in sin will receive the sentence of eternal damnation in the lake of fire and live separated from God for all eternity by their own choice. However, those who were true believers and disciples of Jesus will be ushered into joy and eternal life in the new Jerusalem in their resurrected bodies. The new Jerusalem is the city God has prepared for those who love him (*Revelation 21:2-4)*.

The Bible says there will be a new heaven and a new earth after judgment day; all will be made new. There will be no more death, sorrow, pain, tears, or sin, for the former things will have passed away. This is the blessed hope of all Christians. This is what awaits those who trust in Jesus for all eternity.

Salvation is by grace through faith.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." Ephesians 2:8-9

Salvation is a **gift**. Jesus died for our sins as an act of love because we had no way to save ourselves and be reconciled back to God because of our sins and rebellion. We receive this gift of salvation and reconciliation to God through his blood by **faith. Faith** means **trust, belief, or confidence** in God. **Grace** is the **unmerited favor and kindness** of God towards humanity. By placing our confidence and trust in Jesus' atonement for our sins through his death and resurrection, we are saved.

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9-10

Historical and intellectual beliefs and knowledge about Jesus cannot save anyone. Our own goodness cannot save us because we can never be good enough for God. Jesus desires a living and absolute trust in Him for salvation from sin. This requires first an admission that one is a sinner and cannot save oneself, and that without him they are doomed. With that admission and realization, one must then cast oneself fully as a drowning, helpless, hopeless, and dying man upon the cross and person of Jesus Christ as the only hope for life and salvation. This is the faith God seeks and the faith that saves.

Grace is not a license to sin.

It is important to note that grace is not permission to continue living in sin. God's grace enables and empowers us to please him and live righteous lives by the power of the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer.

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Titus 2:11-13

"And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." Colossians 1:22-23

Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus.

In the first sermon preached after Jesus's resurrection, the crowd asked, *"What shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:37-38*

"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Acts 20:21

A man asked the Apostle Paul and Silas in the Bible, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." Acts 16:30-31*

Repentance is a complete change of mind. It is a turning away from a life without God to absolute trust in Jesus Christ only for salvation.

New creation in Christ

We are born again and saved from our sins when we genuinely **believe** (in our hearts) in the atoning work of Jesus on the cross for us, **repent** of our former sinful and rebellious way of life (*acknowledge and confess our sins and turn away from them*), and **confess** Jesus as our Lord and Savior with our whole heart and being. If you truly believe in what Jesus accomplished for you on the cross and turn from your former life, you will receive his life in exchange for yours and receive

eternal life. You will become God's child. The Holy Spirit will come and live inside you and make you a brand new creature. You will pass from death to life.

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." Proverbs 28:13

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." John 1:12

The Bible says that all who believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior have their names written in His Book of Life in Heaven. This is one of the books that will be opened and checked on the day of judgment to grant souls admission into heaven (*Revelation 20:12, 15*).

Steps to be saved or born again

The process of salvation can be summarized by the following ABCs:

1. Admit

Admit that you are a sinner and have sinned against a holy God. Acknowledge that you cannot save yourself and need a savior. Mention and confess all your sins to Jesus and ask him to forgive you.

"All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

"As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one.'" Romans 3:10

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 6:23

2. Believe

Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross for you. Trust that by his death and resurrection, he paid the price for your sins, and that if you place your trust in his sacrifice, he will make you a new creature, and you will be born again. Have faith and trust that Jesus will give you his life and his Spirit, reconcile you to God, and give you eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18

3. Confess

Confess that Jesus Christ is your Lord. Make this confession boldly with your mouth henceforth. Tell someone that you have been saved. Continue to confess that Jesus is Lord, not just in word but in deed. You do this by following him, learning more about how to please him, obeying him, and growing as a Christian.

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Romans 10:9-10

"Whoever will confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father who is in heaven." Matthew 10:12

Salvation Prayer

If you have believed the gospel message, decided to follow Jesus, and would like to accept him as your Lord and Savior, go on your knees and pray to him from your heart. In your own words, confess all your sins to him, acknowledge that you have sinned against him, and ask him to forgive you. Confess to him that you believe he is the Son of God, the savior of the world, and the only way to the Father and heaven. Pour out your heart to him in your own words, and ask him to fill you with his Holy Spirit. It is with the heart that we believe, and by faith, we are made righteous (**justified**).

The Bible says, *"Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:13. Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." John 6:37.* If you call on him sincerely, he will not reject you.

If you have prayed sincerely and placed your trust in Jesus Christ for salvation with all your heart, the Bible says you are now a new creature. You have been born again and have received a new nature from Jesus Christ! The Bible says heaven and the angels are rejoicing with you now that you are born again and your name is written in Jesus's Book of Life in heaven (*Revelation 20:12, 15; Revelation 21:27)*.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come." 2 Corinthians 5:17

"I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." Luke 15:7

"Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Luke 15:10

Now that you are born again, fix your mind to live for Jesus always, get to know him through his Word, the Holy Bible, pray to him daily, and obey him all the days of your life so that you can make it to heaven when you leave this world.

Importance of Water Baptism for the Believer

The Bible tells us that new believers should be baptized by immersion in water upon salvation. Jesus' last command to his disciples was to preach the gospel to all and baptize believers.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, ***baptizing*** *them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Matthew 28:19*

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ***He who believes and is baptized will be saved****; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Mark 16:15-16*

Baptism is one of the two ordinances Jesus left to the church. The other is the Lord's Supper. These two ordinances are for born-again believers and are not optional, being the commands of the Lord.

Baptism happens after salvation and symbolizes our being buried in death with Jesus and resurrected with him to newness of life. It is a **public** declaration of our new life in Christ and belonging to the body of Christ. (*Colossians 2:12, Romans 6:4*). *1 Peter 3:21* also says that baptism is a "*pledge of a clear conscience toward God*."

Jesus was baptized

Jesus set the example for us by being baptized by John the Baptist before he began his public ministry. He said it was to fulfill all righteousness: an act of obedience. We must do likewise.

"When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in a bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." Luke 3:21-22

"But John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" "Let it be so now," Jesus replied. "It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness in this way." Then John permitted Him." Matthew 3:14-15

The new converts in the Book of Acts were all baptized immediately after salvation.

In the book of Acts in the Bible, we find that all who believed in Jesus Christ in the early church were **immediately** baptized by immersion in water. (Read *Acts 2:37-41, 8:36-38, 10:47-48,*

16:13-15, 16:27-34, 18:5-8, 19:1-5, 22:14-17). Baptism is the visible, public confession that one has been born again!

In the very first sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter said to the first believers, *"**Repent, and be baptized** every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost…Then they that gladly received his word **were baptized**: and the same day there were added unto them about **three thousand souls.**"* *Acts 2:38*, 41

Paul was baptized 3 days after conversion when the Lord Jesus sent Ananias to lay hands on him to receive his sight and the Holy Spirit! Ananias then baptized him immediately after. (*Acts 9:17-19*).

The Ephesian disciples whom Paul found unbaptized due to ignorance were baptized immediately by him (*Acts 19:1-5)*.

Not to be baptized is disobedience to Jesus

The significance of baptism cannot be overstated. Some people view it as optional or not important. Others think it is not urgent and take years to be baptized, or do not get baptized at all. Still others choose baptism methods not found in the New Testament, such as baptizing babies or baptizing unbelievers. But Jesus obeyed the Father and was baptized, and we should follow his example and do likewise.

Not getting baptized is clear disobedience to the Lord's commands and a declaration that we do not belong to the body of Christ. If we love Jesus, we MUST keep his commandments (*John 14:15)*. The apostles of Jesus took his command seriously and baptized all the new converts immediately after they received the Lord, usually on the same day when possible.

*"But **when they believed** Philip as he preached the gospel of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, **they were baptized**, both men and women." Acts 8:12*

Baptism is an outward sign of the believer's new life

There were no extensive baptism classes in the early church, and it did not take weeks, months, or years to baptize converts. It was **immediate**. Once new converts understood the message of salvation and made that decision, they were immediately baptized. Baptism was considered an essential part of the new believer's experience of salvation to signify their new life. At baptism,

the new converts were proclaiming to the world that they were dying to their old life and rising with Christ to a new life. It was public so that there would be witnesses.

Religion and church institutions have made this matter very complex, and I believe it is a device of the devil so that baptism is not taken seriously, people can die without baptism, and new converts are robbed of the power of baptism for their Christian walk.

I think it is very wrong for churches to keep people for months or even years without getting baptized for no good reason. It should be taken seriously and done as soon as possible because Jesus said, "*Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved*." It is the Lord's command, and it is how we publicly identify with his death and resurrection.

The significance of water baptism

1. Public baptism into the death and resurrection of Christ

In the act of immersion in the waters of baptism, the believer is 'symbolically' united with Jesus in his death and resurrection. It is a special experience that a new believer should not be robbed of.

*"Do you not know that **as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death**? Therefore, we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:3-4*

*"And having been **buried with Him in baptism, you were raised with Him through your faith** in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead." Colossians 2:12*

2. Rising to new life in Christ

There is a profound spiritual experience that occurs at baptism, and once the believer rises from the waters of baptism, their conscience (*not their sins; the blood of Jesus alone cleanses sin*) is truly washed, and they rise to a newness of life. It is a mystery, but anyone who has been properly baptized can attest to its power. Everything the Lord asks us to do is not a mere formality but has real meaning and blessing, and power attached.

*"And this water symbolizes the baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body, but the **pledge of a clear conscience toward God**—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 3:21*

Some people have had special experiences where they were delivered from demonic bondage and sinful habits during baptism. On the day of my baptism, I witnessed many people have demons leave them as they rose out of the water in loud shrieks. I heard a testimony shared on YouTube about a man who had his tattoos disappear after rising out of the water at baptism. God can do anything, and people have had special experiences of freedom during baptism. Some have also experienced the baptism of the Holy Spirit as they rose from the waters speaking in tongues. In the early church, they encouraged people to fast for a day or more before their baptism, and I believe this was in expectation that God would do something great for them.

3. Baptism into the body of Christ

At baptism, we are also baptized into Christ, into the body of Christ, and clothe ourselves with Christ. This means that if we reject baptism, we are excluding ourselves from the body of Christ. In fact, in the early Church, new believers could not partake in holy communion (the Lord's supper) unless they were baptized.

*"For all of you who were **baptized into Christ,** have clothed yourselves with Christ." Galatians 3:27*

Baptism – Who and How?

***"**There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, **one baptism**; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." Ephesians 4:4-6*

The verse above tells us that there is only one baptism. The Bible makes it very clear that:

1. **Baptism is for born-again believers**. This eliminates infant and child baptism because babies and children cannot make a conscious personal decision to be born again. Children can be dedicated to God, but not baptized.
2. **Baptism is by immersion**. Every baptism in the New Testament, including Jesus's baptism, was done by immersion into water, which is the only way to symbolize being buried with Christ and rising again to newness of life. In very rare cases where it is not possible to immerse someone, the early church fathers permitted water to be poured on someone, but one should make an effort to be baptized by immersion, even if it is in a tub.
3. **Baptism formula:** Jesus instructed the disciples to baptize "*in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19*). This is how most Christian churches

throughout history have baptized. The **Didache** (c. 70–120 AD), an early Christian manual, clearly instructs baptism **"in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."** In the Book of Acts, it is recorded that new converts were baptized "*in the name of the Lord Jesus*" (*Acts 2:38, Acts 8:16, Acts 10:48, Acts 19:5*). Though this seems a conflict, the common understanding is that the phrase "*in the name of Jesus"* may have meant **by the authority of Jesus** and **into the salvation of Jesus**, not necessarily a rigid baptismal formula (we are asked to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus (*Colossians 3:17)).*

What about those who die before baptism?

There are unique cases where people die before they have had a **genuine** opportunity to be baptized after getting saved. God knows the truth in each situation. But it is different if you're deliberately postponing it out of rebellion, disobedience, or dismissing it as not important.

You will have no excuse before God and cannot use the thief on the cross as your excuse. God knows all things. If your church is not taking baptism seriously, it is up to you to find someone to baptize you. When it comes to obeying God, you should always obey God rather than men.

Baptism is not optional.

Baptism is not optional because it is a command of our Lord. I urge you to make haste and be baptized immediately if you are born-again but not baptized. It is also important for us who preach the gospel to make every effort to ensure new converts are baptized.

How to Receive the Baptism in the Holy Spirit

Baptism in the Holy Spirit is a supernatural experience in which a believer receives power for the Christian life and service to God. This experience happens after salvation. It is also often called being filled with the Holy Spirit or receiving the Holy Spirit. The term "*baptism in the Holy Spirit*" was first used by John the Baptist when he foretold what Jesus would do for believers.

"I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." Matthew 3:11

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8

In this teaching, we will look at the Holy Spirit's role in believers' lives and the baptism in the Holy Spirit in greater detail:

However, it is important to note that all believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit immediately after salvation. It is the Holy Spirit in the believer who confirms (*by inner witness and regeneration*) that one is now a child of God. Unbelievers do not have the Holy Spirit. Upon being born again, the new believer has the Holy Spirit living with and in them. They are sealed with the Holy Spirit as belonging to God (*Ephesians* 1:13*).* They become the temple of the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 3:16*).

"For by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit." 1 Corinthians 12:13

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is referred to as a distinct person in the word of God. Jesus referred to Him as the Spirit of the Father (*Matthew 10:20*) and the Spirit of Truth (*John 15:26*). He is also called the Eternal Spirit (*Hebrews 9:14*), the Spirit of Holiness *(Romans 1:4)*, and so much more. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit is sent by Him (Jesus) to his disciples and proceeds from the Father (*John 15:26*). He is also called the Spirit of Christ (*Romans 8:9*).

It is the Holy Spirit who was sent by Jesus from the Father to be **WITH us** (born-again children of God and the body of Christ) and **IN us** after he ascended back to heaven. This intricate relationship reveals the Oneness of the Father, Son, and Spirit.

"But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." John 15:26

The Holy Spirit's role before salvation

It is important to note that the Holy Spirit's work begins **before** salvation. It is He who convicts souls of sin, showing men the need for a savior. The Holy Spirit always glorifies Jesus by leading souls to him.

"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." John 16:8-11

The Holy Spirit's role in believers' lives after salvation

Holy Spirit, our helper and sanctifier

Jesus called the Holy Spirit our **helper/advocate/comforter.** He told his disciples that after his resurrection, he would ask the Father to send another helper who would be with them forever (*John 14:16-18*; *Acts 2:33*). The Holy Spirit is our helper, guiding us through this world as children of God. He prepares us for heaven by sanctifying us as we submit to Him; He is our **sanctifier** (*1 Corinthians 6:11*).

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." John 14:16-18

The Holy Spirit seals us and identifies us as God's children.

The Holy Spirit comes to indwell the born-again child of God and seal and identify them as a child of God. He is the guarantee that the believer belongs to God (*Romans 8:16, Ephesians 1:13-14*). The Holy Spirit allows us to call God '*Abba Father'* (*Galatians 4:6*, *Romans 8:15*). Once we

become born again, we become the temple of the Holy Spirit. He marks us as God's possession (*1 Corinthians 6:19-20*).

The Holy Spirit, our teacher and guide

The Holy Spirit is the primary teacher of the child of God. The child of God must learn to have a relationship with the Holy Spirit and know his voice. It is he who **teaches us all things** (*John 14:26; 1 John 2:20, 27*). He **guides us into all truth**. **Whatever he hears from Jesus, he speaks** and **tells us things to come** (*John 16:13-15*).

The Holy Spirit will always **glorify Jesus** by **taking what's of Jesus and declaring it to us** (*John 16:14*). He **brings to the believers' remembrance all that Jesus has spoken** (*John 14:26*). The Holy Spirit never contradicts or goes outside the scriptures. He glorifies Jesus and always draws men to Him. Any spirit that glorifies anything or anyone apart from Jesus is not the Holy Spirit.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

The Bible talks about the **baptism** of the Holy Spirit as a separate experience available for believers after salvation.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit empowers

When the believer is baptized with the Holy Spirit, they receive **the power** that enables them to **witness** for Jesus boldly and do the work of the ministry. The boldness the Holy Spirit gives is supernatural and not the result of personality or effort. We see in *Acts 2* how the once cowardly Peter became bold and willing to die after he received the Holy Spirit.

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Acts 1:8

Holy Spirit baptism activates supernatural spiritual gifts in believers.

The Holy Spirit gives us **spiritual gifts** as he chooses to serve God (*1 Corinthians 12*), preach the gospel, and build up the body of Christ. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are supernatural, and they tend to be awakened in the believer once they are filled with the Holy Spirit. *1 Corinthians 12* gives a list of spiritual gifts, which includes prophecy, healing, miracles, etc.

Many receive the gift of speaking in **tongues** as the **initial evidence** of being filled or baptized with the Holy Spirit. Tongues are a heavenly prayer language given to believers to communicate supernaturally with God (*1 Corinthians 14:2*). There are different kinds of gifts of tongues, and

tongues can serve as a sign to unbelievers, like in *Acts 2*. The gift of tongues is also given to certain believers to give a message to the Church. This is usually accompanied by the gift of interpretation of tongues (*1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 Corinthians 14:27-28*).

Holy Spirit baptism in the early Church

The Book of Acts gives us many examples of believers being baptized or filled with the Holy Spirit. Each situation was different.

The first disciples

When Jesus was ascending to heaven after his resurrection, he told his disciples*, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you (the Holy Spirit); but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high." Luke 24:49.*

10 days later, on the day of Pentecost, while the disciples worshiped God and waited for the filling of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had instructed them, the Holy Spirit fell upon them. He filled them, and they spoke with other tongues (*read Acts 2*).

The disciples were already born again, but Jesus asked them to wait for the baptism of the Spirit to receive power from on high. After this experience, the apostles preached the gospel with a power and authority that they did not have before. They also performed signs and wonders. This was despite the immense persecution that followed them as they preached.

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:1-4

The Samaritans

In *Acts 8*, Philip the evangelist preached to many in Samaria who got born again and baptized them in water. Afterwards, the apostles Peter and John went to Samaria and discovered that the new converts had not yet been baptized with the Holy Spirit. They prayed for the new believers to receive the Holy Spirit by laying hands on them. This passage proves that one can be born again without receiving the baptism of the Spirit. Peter and John were able to verify this.

"Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit." Acts 8:14-17

Cornelius, his relatives, and friends

The first Gentile converts, **Cornelius and those in his house,** were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues while Peter was preaching the gospel to them (*Acts 10:44-46* and *Acts 11:15-16*). Cornelius and those in his house did not have Peter lay hands on them. They simply got baptized in the Holy Spirit as they listened intently to the Word of God. They were filled with the Holy Spirit even before baptism.

The believers at Ephesus

In Acts 19:1-7, Paul asks a group of converts he meets at Ephesus if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed in Jesus. They said they had not. Paul then proceeded to baptize them in water and then laid hands on them, and prayed, and they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.

"Paul passed through the interior and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?" "No," they answered, "we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." Acts 19:1-2

In every account in the Book of Acts, the converts spoke in tongues after baptism in the Holy Ghost. Some received the baptism immediately upon salvation, some long after salvation, others after water baptism, and some before water baptism.

How to receive the Holy Spirit

There is no particular formula for receiving the Holy Spirit except for faith in God and his promise, as we have seen in the examples in the Book of Acts. Some were filled while worshiping and praying, others while listening to the preaching of God's word, and others by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. Some were filled before baptism, and some after baptism. Others received the baptism of the Holy Spirit immediately upon salvation, while others received it long after salvation.

Ask in prayer by faith.

You can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit in many ways. You can ask God to fill you while in prayer or while worshiping, as the disciples did on the day of Pentecost (*Acts 2*). The disciples locked themselves in that upper room for 10 days, waiting in faith for Jesus to give them the promise of the Holy Spirit. And he did. You likewise ask in faith, believing what Jesus said in *Luke 11:18*, that the Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. Do not give up. This promise is for you. The key is faith. All of God's gifts are received by faith.

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call." Acts 2:38-39

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" Luke 11:13

Laying on of hands

You can also receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands by a Holy Spirit-filled servant of God. This is what happened in Samaria and in Ephesus through the laying on of the apostles' hands. But please make sure you ask God to direct you to a born-again minister or Bible-believing church.

When you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you will know. It is a wonderful and evident experience. You will receive boldness and power you didn't have before. You will receive the gift of tongues if you desire and believe.

As children of God, we should know that we can have a personal and intimate relationship with the Holy Spirit. He was left with us here on earth when Jesus went to heaven. He is our helper and not only dwells with us but is in us.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Romans 8:14

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion (fellowship) of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." 2 Corinthians 13:14

The Partnership of the Godhead in Salvation of Souls

The Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are all actively involved in the salvation of souls. It is a beautiful, mysterious, and synergetic partnership, and each does his role perfectly and in harmony.

1. The Father draws and gives souls to the Son

No one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws them and gives them to the Son. The Father is the originator of salvation.

"36 But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. 44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day… 65 And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father." John 6:36-37, 44, 65

"My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand." John 10:29

2. The Son reveals the Father and keeps and gives his sheep eternal life

2.1. The Son reveals the Father.

No one can know the Father unless Jesus reveals Him to them. It's impossible to know God without Jesus since it is Jesus that reveals him. Those who are not born again cannot know the true God.

"All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Matthew 11:27

"No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." John 1:18

2.2. The Son gives his sheep eternal life.

The Son does the Father's will by shepherding the sheep the Father gives him and giving them eternal life. Jesus knows his sheep.

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:38-40

"But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one." John 10:26-30

3. The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin

The Holy Spirit convicts souls of sin, showing men the need for a savior and pointing them to Jesus for salvation. The Holy Spirit always glorifies Jesus by leading souls to him.

"And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged." John 16:8-11

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you." John 16:13-14

Man's Role in His Salvation

It's clear from scripture that man also has a role. He has to choose to respond to and cooperate with God in his salvation (repent, believe, obey, and abide). Although Jesus chose the 12 disciples, one of them was lost because he chose to follow Satan. God's work in salvation does not hinder or overthrow our free will.

"While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." John 17:12

"Then Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also want to go away?" But Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" John 6:67-70

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned." John 15:4-6

True Salvation Is Being Born Again (of God)

True salvation is not simply repeating a prayer after a preacher, but repenting and being born again of God/from above.

Just as in the natural birth process, spiritual rebirth is painful. The man or woman is (literally) being BORN again of God. It is a painful experience when confronted by and convicted of their sin. When the baby leaves the birth canal of its mother, the baby cries from the shock of the new environment. There is a pain as the baby leaves the comfort it was used to for the new life, but afterwards a joy as it's united to its mother. It is the same for anyone who has experienced genuine salvation and rebirth.

As the sinner is confronted with the depth of their sin when the Holy Spirit convicts them, there is pain. There is the pain of knowing they have offended God and the pain of finally seeing their true nature as depraved sinners. This pain pushes the new convert to cry out for mercy: *"Lord save me!"* The sinner repents and regrets their sins, asks for mercy, and makes a decision to believe and follow Christ the Savior. That is true salvation. As the sinner cries out for mercy and believes in the Lord Jesus as salvation, they are pushed out of God's birth canal and birthed anew. There is thereafter joy as the new convert is reunited with their heavenly father.

"Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, ***unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.****" Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." John 3:3-6*

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, ***but of God****." John 1:12-13*

Any conversion experience that has no conviction of sin and no true repentance is not a conversion. Repeating a prayer after someone is not repentance. Yes, sometimes it may begin there depending on where they hear the gospel, but there must still be a personal conviction of sin and repentance that happens; otherwise, the person is not born again. Most conversions are not genuine, and that's why those people do not produce fruit in keeping with repentance but only become religious.

If one claims to have been saved but never felt sorrow for their personal sin and repented, it is possible they only believed in religion and a false Jesus and not the Savior. The Holy Spirit convicts of sin. Joining a church or doing religious activities is not salvation. To be saved is to be rescued from sin just like a drowning man is rescued from the sea; the person must cry out for mercy from the depths of the heart.

Once this person has repented, they leave everything of their old life and follow Christ. The old man is dead, and the new life begins.

We see these examples in scripture as well. Here are a few conversion experiences from those who encountered Jesus or heard the gospel from the Apostles:

1. Apostle Peter

"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" ... And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men." So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him." Luke 5:8, 10, 11

2. The Tax Collector

"And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:13-14

3. The First Converts on the Day of Pentecost (3,000 Souls)

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:37-38

4. Apostle Paul

"As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do? Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." Acts 9:3-6

5. The Philippian Jailer

"Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized." Acts 16:29-33

6. The Corinthian Converts

"Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

7. The Thessalonian Converts

"Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come." 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10

8. Cornelius and Family

"So I sent to you immediately, and you have done well to come. Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God…While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word." Acts 10:33, 44

Are you born again? Have you repented and believed the gospel of Jesus Christ?

I would like to invite you to read the following passages and see how the Disciples of Jesus Christ presented the gospel message in the book of Acts. Is this what you have believed? If you believe what they preached, do what they commanded: repent, believe in the Lord Jesus for the remission/forgiveness of your sins, and be baptized.

- *Acts 2:14-40*, Peter Preaching at Pentecost
- *Acts 3:11-26*, Peter in Jerusalem
- *Acts 4:5-12*, Peter speaking to Jewish leaders
- *Acts 5:29-32*, Peter speaking to Jewish leaders
- *Acts 7:1-60*, Stephen talking to the Jews
- *Acts 8:26-40*, Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch
- *Acts 10:23-48*, Peter talking to Cornelius
- *Acts 13:6-15*, Paul in front of Serigus Paulus
- *Acts 13:16-41*, Paul speaking in the synagogue in Psidian Antioch
- *Acts 14:8-18*, Paul speaking to Greeks in Lystra
- *Acts 16:25-34*, Paul speaking to the Jailer
- *Acts 17:16-34*, Paul speaking to the Greeks in Athens
- *Acts 22:1-29*, Paul giving his testimony to Jewish people
- *Acts 24:10-21*, Paul speaking to Felix
- *Acts 26:1-19,* Paul giving his testimony to Agrippa.

What Is the (True) Gospel Preached by the Lord Jesus?

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." JESUS, Mark 1:14-15

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." PETER, Acts 2:37-38

REPENT and BELIEVE. That's the gospel Jesus and his disciples preached: not come as you are and accept Jesus in your heart. Neither Jesus nor the Apostles preached such a gospel that's very popular today. The gospel message is one of REPENTANCE and RIGHTEOUSNESS.

What does this mean? It means to acknowledge that we are filthy sinners who have sinned against a HOLY God, offended him, fallen short of his glory, and have no righteousness of our own. It means to acknowledge and confess our sins and our own righteousness, TURN away from them, and then accept Christ's free sin offering of himself as our ransom from sin, placing no more trust in ourselves but in his righteousness, which he imputes to us. And after this, to then CONTINUE in his righteousness in the fear of God, daily becoming more like him by the sanctification of the HOLY Spirit to the END.

The Gospel Message Is Not an Event

The salvation preached by the apostles was an ongoing one. It was not an event but a walk, a race, a fight, a journey with a destination. We are saved, being saved, and shall be saved. Our salvation culminates when we leave this world and finally when we receive our resurrected bodies on that great day. It is a process, and that's why we are called to ENDURE because it is possible to lose our salvation by giving it up and going back to our past sins. The Lord Jesus and the apostle Paul made it clear that it is possible to be disqualified.

Salvation is not cheap. It cost Jesus, the son of God, his life. It is not a matter of saying a sinner's prayer and remaining unregenerated. It is a real conversion experience where one comes face to face with their utter depravity and cries out, *"What must I do to be saved?"* like the 3,000 first converts who heard Peter on the day of Pentecost.

"*Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men, and brethren, WHAT SHALL WE DO?" Acts 2:37.* Peter then told them to REPENT, not accept Jesus in their hearts, and repeat a prayer. True salvation comes with a conviction of one's sinfulness and need for salvation. It is a personal cry to God.

Or like the jailer who was so convicted by the power of God, where Paul and Saul were prisoners, that he asked*, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30)*. If you need to be cooed and wooed to be saved by sweet words, then there is no real conversion.

The Gospel Transforms!

When the Holy Spirit convicts a man, he knows he is a sinner and cries out in repentance for salvation. That's the real gospel. It is sinners being saved and made righteous by the atonement of Jesus' sacrifice of himself and then being made and kept righteous for the coming kingdom because heaven is for the holy, for saints, not sinners. You must be born again! (*John 3:3*)

The Children of God vs. Children of the Devil

Many people believe that all human beings are children of God, but the word of God tells us that this is not true. The Bible clearly states that there are children of God and children of the devil. All humans are creations of God, but not all are children of God.

"The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one." Matthew 13:38

The children of the devil are also referred to as the children of the wicked one *(Matthew 13:38)*, the children of disobedience (*Colossians 3:6*, *Ephesians 5:6*, *Ephesians 2:2)*, and the children of wrath *(Ephesians 2:3)*.

The children of God are referred to as the children of the kingdom *(Matthew 13:38)*, the children of God (*Romans 8:16*, *Matthew 5:9*), and the sons of God (*John 1:12*, *Romans 8:14*)

All human beings fall into either one of these two categories whether they like it or not, know it or not.

Characteristics of the children of God and the children of the Devil

1. Righteousness vs. Unrighteousness

Apostle John makes it clear in the book of *1 John chapter 3* that he who commits sin (makes a habit of sin) is a child of the devil, and he who works righteousness is a child of God. This is because God is righteous and therefore he cannot have sinful children. His seed is holy and so his children are holy. A tree produces fruit according to its nature. An orange tree cannot produce lemons. God cannot produce sinners, and that is why Jesus says that we must be BORN AGAIN to see the kingdom of God.

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ***In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil****: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." 1 John 3:8-10*

2. God's nature vs. the devil's nature

Jesus told the Pharisees that the devil was their father because they did not love Jesus nor obey him, but did what the devil does which is murder and lie. They had the devil's nature making them his children.

"Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me…Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it…He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." John 8:42, 44, 47

Jesus gives us the power to become the sons (children) of God

Jesus died for our sins and rose again defeating the power of sin and death that had kept humanity in bondage to Satan (*Hebrews 2:15)*. This was so that whoever believes in him and what he did on the cross, may receive his Spirit and thus his nature. We become partakers of his death and resurrection by believing in his sacrifice for us, and are then translated from the kingdom of darkness to his kingdom (*Colossians 1:13*). We then become new creatures and the old nature dies. These new creatures are the sons of God and no longer children of the devil.

This means that all of us are children of the devil before we believe in Jesus for salvation. That is because we are born sinners. *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)* Apostle John says that *"the whole world lies in wickedness." (1 John 5:19)*. We are all slaves of Satan until Jesus sets us free.

We see therefore that Jesus alone gives us power to become the sons of God. He came to redeem many sons unto his father.

*"But **as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name**: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12*

"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Hebrews 2:10

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Colossians 1:13

"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

3 Categories of Children of the Devil

We have seen that humans are divided into two categories, the children of God, and those of the devil. But not all people are aware that they are children of the devil. However, we have seen that the main identifier of the devil's children is that they do the will of the devil, live in sin, and disobey God.

The children of the devil can be divided into 3 groups:

1. Those who know they are the children of the devil

These are those who are consciously serving the devil knowing that they are serving the devil. In this group are people like witches, wizards, Satanists, and so forth.

"There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch. Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord." Deuteronomy 18:9-12

2. Those who are the children of the devil but think they are children of God

In this category sadly are lukewarm and compromising Christians. That is those who live a double life, wanting it both ways. They want Jesus but they also want their sins. Jesus said that he would vomit the lukewarm out of his mouth (*Revelations 3:16*) and further said that on the day of judgment, he would tell such people he never knew them because they were workers of iniquity (*Matthew 7:23*).

"Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Matthew 7:21-23

3. Those who are children of the devil by default

In this category are all unbelievers: those who have not accepted Jesus as savior and Lord. By rejecting the salvation Jesus offers, they have chosen to remain as children of the devil. Those in this category are of varying beliefs: they may not believe in the devil, believe they are good people, followers of other religions, atheists, the stubborn, those who love sin, etc. But though they may not consciously be serving the devil, they are his children as long as they remain in their sins and reject Jesus's offer of salvation.

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18

Separation at the final judgment

In the parable of the tares (*Matthew 13:38-43*) and the parable of the nets (*Matthew 13:47-50* Jesus told us that in the final judgment, the separation shall be made between the children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one. This will be at the close of the age when the devil and his children shall be cast into the lake of fire forever, while the children of God shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father forever.

May God help us to not only choose to be his children but remain his children until the end by obeying him, in Jesus's name!

The Parable of the tares

"[38] The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;
[39] The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.
[40] As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.
[41] The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;
[42] And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
[43] Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Matthew 13:38-43

Parable of the net

"[47] Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:
[48] Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.
[49] So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,
[50] And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
[51] Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord." Matthew 13:47-50

The Cost of Discipleship—Have You Counted the Cost?

There is a cost to following Jesus. To be a disciple of Christ and not just a professing Christian or religious Christian has a cost and price to pay. It is a narrow road, and it is difficult and littered with persecutions, reproach, and separation. It is not a walk in the park. Being a disciple of Christ is not a cool thing; it is not being a member of a church institution or even doing things in the name of Jesus. It is a lifestyle of absolute surrender to the ways of Jesus and the will of God.

There were two distinct reactions from those who followed Jesus, and it is the same even today:

1. The multitudes: Only wanted to follow him for miracles and blessings

"This is a difficult teaching. Who can accept it?" ...From that time on many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him." John 6:60, 66

2. Peter and the other 11 disciples: Willing to follow him no matter what!

"So Jesus asked the Twelve, "Do you want to leave too?" Simon Peter replied, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God." John 6:67-69

Here are a few things Jesus himself mentioned as the cost of following Him. Have you counted the cost?

Matthew 16:24-25: Self-denial

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Matthew 10:34-39: Separation

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after

me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it."

Luke 9:23-25: Losing one's life and self-will

"Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?"

Luke 9:57-60: Uncertainty and Unattachment

"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

Luke 14:26-33: Loving Jesus more than everyone

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple."

John 15:19: Being hated by the world

"If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

Matthew 5:29-30: Cutting off stumbling blocks

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell."

Matthew 6:24: Choosing Jesus over money

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

Matthew 6:19-21: Laying up treasures in heaven

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Matthew 5:11-12: Persecution, slander, and reproach

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Prepare to Meet Your God

Each of us has an **appointment with God we must and shall keep**. Are you ready for yours? Like it or not, it is coming, **and you do not know the day or the hour**. **Either death will take you first, or Jesus will return first.** Either way, each of us shall keep that appointment with our maker after this life to face judgment.

"It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." Hebrews 9:27

We shall all give an account of our lives and what we did with the gift of salvation the Father has provided through his son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the only way to the Father. He said:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John14:6

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16

Reflect upon your life. Are you ready to meet God? If not, it is time to get your affairs in order and be ready always. Turn from your sins and turn to Jesus. Do not let that day come upon you like a thief. Face it now while God's grace and mercy are still available. That way, you won't face it when it comes to you unexpectedly, because then it will be too late.

Heaven and Hell are real places, and the only way to heaven is **repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and his sacrifice on the cross for our sins**. Hell is a place of terrible eternal torment, but sadly it is the eternal destination for those who do not make a decision for Jesus. I pray you give your life to Jesus today and receive eternal life!

"Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect." Matthew 24:24

Put your house in order

King Hezekiah in the bible was fortunate to have been given a prior warning by the prophet Isaiah about his death. Isaiah told him, "*Put your house in order, for you are about to die; you" (Isaiah 38:1)*. Most of us will not get that warning however. But God would speak the same words to us today: "*Put your house in order"*. Death comes upon most people like a trap, suddenly and without warning.

In *Luke 12*, Jesus gave the parable of the rich fool. The man was exceedingly wealthy and boasted within himself, making plans about how he would live for many years and eat, drink, and make merry. But that very night as he made his big plans for the future, God told him, *"You fool! This very night your soul is demanded of you; and as for all that you have prepared, who will own it now?" (Luke 12:20) And Jesus warned, "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:21)*

You can have peace with God

The most important thing we can do in life is to be ready for that inevitable appointment with our maker. Nothing else in this life matters more. And God has provided a way for us to face that day without terror and wrath. He gave his only begotten son Jesus Christ to die on the cross and be a ransom for our sins. He did this so that we may not perish but have eternal life *(John 3:16)*. God has provided the way for our salvation, and all we have to do is recognize that we are sinners headed to hell and turn to Jesus to save us.

"For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."1 Thessalonians 5:9

Receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior Today

If you are ready to turn to Jesus, simply get down on your knees and talk to Jesus, confess, and repent of all your sins. Ask Jesus to forgive you of all your sins, and be willing to turn from them. Tell him in your own words that you believe he is the son of God and the savior of the world and that you believe he died for your sins on the cross and paid a price you could never pay. Tell him that you receive him as your Savior and also as your LORD to take over your life and help you live for him all the days of your life. Pour out your heart to him.

If you do this sincerely from your heart, he will receive you and immediately your name will be written in the book of life in heaven. There will be much rejoicing in heaven over your decision to turn from death to life. Get a bible and start reading from the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament to know more about how to follow Jesus, pray daily, find a Bible-believing church to grow in your faith with fellow Christians who will walk with you, and get baptized in water. You are now a member of the family of God and one day when you leave this world you will spend eternity with Jesus and all who believe in him. Do not look back, keep following Jesus to the very end. See you in heaven.

All is Vanity

Solomon the wisest man that ever lived, and the wealthiest, pondered the meaning of life. He concluded that it was all vanity if the purpose was to live for self and pleasures. He realized that the rich man was only storing up riches for those after him who would likely squander it. Maybe you have thought about this too. **Who will inherit all your toil and labor?** Solomon likewise concluded that the poor man and the rich, the wise and foolish all would share the same fate in the end, which is **death**, and both likewise would be forgotten momentarily. This led him to ponder life beyond the grave. Have you thought about this? After 80 years if lucky in this world, **what next**?

The world to come is eternal. Doesn't it deserve more of your attention and consideration? It is a life where money, influence, and power cannot bribe their way through. God has appointed that all men shall account for their lives and what they did with the sacrifice of his SON to die for their sins. After death, we are all at the mercy of a judge who cannot be bought or bribed with our wealth because he made all things, including us. **The truly wise realize this**. He desires a free-will relationship with us while we are alive. He sent Jesus to die for our sins so we could have his righteousness and eternal life after this brief life.

I pray you will consider giving him your life today. He offers a greater inheritance after death than all the riches and wealth we could accumulate here. He loves you so much that he gave Jesus his son to die for your sins. **God bless you as you ponder your eternal destiny.**

Ecclesiastes 2- Written by Solomon the Great:

Pleasures Are Meaningless

2 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. 2 "Laughter," I said, "is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?" 3 I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives.

4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. 5 I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. 6 I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. 7 I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. 8 I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a

harem as well—the delights of a man's heart. [9] *I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.*

[10] *I denied myself nothing my eyes desired;*
I refused my heart no pleasure.
My heart took delight in all my labor,
and this was the reward for all my toil.
[11] *Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done*
and what I had toiled to achieve,
everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind;
nothing was gained under the sun.

Wisdom and Folly Are Meaningless

[12] *Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom,*
and also madness and folly.
What more can the king's successor do
than what has already been done?
[13] *I saw that wisdom is better than folly,*
just as light is better than darkness.
[14] *The wise have eyes in their heads,*
while the fool walks in the darkness;
but I came to realize
that the same fate overtakes them both*.*

[15] *Then I said to myself,*

*"**The fate of the fool will overtake me also.***
What then do I gain by being wise?"
I said to myself,
"This too is meaningless."
[16] ***For the wise, like the fool, will not be long remembered;***
the days have already come when both have been forgotten.
Like the fool, the wise too must die*!*

Toil Is Meaningless

[17] *So I hated life, because the work that is done under the sun was grievous to me. All of it is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.* [18] ***I hated all the things I had toiled for under the sun,***

because I must leave them to the one who comes after me. *[19]* ***And who knows whether that person will be wise or foolish? Yet they will have control over all the fruit of my toil into which I have poured my effort and skill under the sun. This too is meaningles****s.*

[20] So my heart began to despair over all my toilsome labor under the sun. *[21]* ***For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune****.* *[22] What do people get for all the toil and anxious striving with which they labor under the sun?* *[23] All their days their work is grief and pain; even at night their minds do not rest. This too is meaningless.*

Jesus gives us hope, life, and purpose both here and, in the world, to come. In him, life is not vanity!

Jesus Came to Fulfil the Law-What Does It Mean?

Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it.

*"Do not think that I have come to abolish (**destroy, dissolve, overthrow**) the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill (**make full, complete**) them." (Matthew 5:17)*

[Abolish: Greek 2647. **kataluó**: **To destroy, to dissolve, to overthrow, to abolish**; Fulfill: Greek 4137. **pléroó: To fill, to make full, to complete, to fulfill]**

"For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Matthew 5:18

*"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but **my words shall not pass away**." Matthew 24:35*

*"...the **scripture cannot be broken**." John 10:35*

*"Do we then make **void** (nullify) **the law through faith**? God forbid: yea, we **establish (**uphold**) the law**." Romans 3:31*

What does not being under the law mean?

There seems to be a lot of misunderstanding about believers in Jesus no longer being expected to keep the law because of Paul's words in *Romans 6:14, "For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace."*

Some people erroneously believe the Old Testament law, which is God's law, has been abolished and that believers no longer need to be concerned about it or keep it. Some think **being under grace** means they can now sin and live how they want because "*we are no longer under the law but under grace.*" They almost seem to use Jesus' brutal death on the cross (for sin) as an excuse to sin, violate God's law, and offend God.

But that is not what '*not being under the law*' means, nor is it what Paul meant. It simply means that we do not earn our righteousness or get salvation from God by keeping the law of Moses, including through sacrificing animals and all the ceremonial rituals and laws the Jews kept to atone for sins in the Old Covenant.

This old system never succeeded in making the Jews righteous because they could not keep God's laws by human effort. Instead, in the new covenant, we are under grace (*God's unmerited favor*),

which has been displayed by God sending his son to die for our sins as a perfect sacrifice once and for all. As a result, God has imputed the righteousness of HIS SON (*the only one who kept the law perfectly*) freely to us. He has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell IN US and given us new birth in Christ so that we can be able to live righteously. The seed of God now dwells in us *(1 John 3:9)*.

That old covenant system of atonement is what Paul was talking about as having been abolished, and not the actual moral law of God.

The New Covenant standards are higher

In the new covenant, through God's grace, we become righteous through Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice and shed blood on the cross. Through faith in Jesus, we receive HIS Spirit, who is HOLY and helps us to keep God's laws and obey him. Christ in us enables us to fulfill the law's righteous requirements.

We are empowered by God's grace to fulfill the law. The NLT translation of *Romans 3:31* puts it this way: *"Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact,* ***only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.*** *"*

Jesus said, "*For I say unto you, that* ***except your righteousness shall exceed*** *the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20*

The standards are higher for New Testament Christians because Jesus lives inside of us through his Spirit, enabling us to fulfill the law.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the ***righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us,*** *who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Romans 8:3-4*

Jesus summarized the law in this: Love

A Pharisee expert in the law asked Jesus, *"Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* ***This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets****." Matthew 22:36-40*

Jesus summarized the entire law in loving God and our neighbors. He said that the law and the prophets hang on these two. The law was a guardian or a schoolmaster to help the Jews fulfill the love of God and man through a list of laws. The Jews were given a list of 613 commandments by God. However, no one was able to fulfill these laws, as it was impossible.

"For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come from the law. But the Scripture pronounces all things confined by sin, so that by faith in Jesus Christ the promise might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law became our guardian to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian." Galatians 3:21-24

*"If **ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture**, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well." James 2:8-12*

"The entire law is fulfilled in a single decree: 'Love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:14

*"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore, **love is the fulfilling of the law**." Romans 13:10*

The law of Christ

Jesus' death and resurrection ended the law of Moses as a means of righteousness with God. In Jesus, the spirit of the law, which is love for God and love for others, is fulfilled. Those who are in Christ are under the law of Christ.

"Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." Galatians 6:2

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2

Jesus kept God's law perfectly; He obeyed God. When we believe in him, his Spirit comes to dwell in us and enables us to fulfill God's law. The Christian is enabled to keep God's moral law by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian is not a slave to sin but free from the power of sin and now a slave to God and his righteousness.

God, through the prophet Ezekiel, pointed to a time when he would write his law in our hearts:

*"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes and to carefully observe My ordinances**." Ezekiel 36:26-27*

Ceremonial vs. Moral Laws

Only the ceremonial laws of atonement and cleansing of sins were abolished because they were shadows of what was to come, which is the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sins. These laws included circumcision, purification rites, blood sacrifices, ceremonial cleansing and washings, dietary restrictions, customary laws, and so forth.

But none of the **moral** laws were abolished. Anything God called evil or an abomination in the Old Covenant is still evil and an abomination to him today. God does not change. God has not changed his mind to now accept sin in the name of grace. That is impossible. Anything God termed as sinful in the Old Covenant is still sinful today because God is still holy. Grace provides the power to obey God's commands; it does not condone sin.

"God is not a man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should change His mind." Numbers 23:19

Jesus fulfilled the law so that we could be enabled to fulfill its requirements by the power of his Spirit in us

Jesus said he didn't come to abolish the law and prophets but to FULFILL them. This means everything the law attempted to do has been fulfilled (made possible) in him, and now man can be made righteous through his blood and made obedient like Jesus was to God's laws (*he came to bring many more (obedient) sons to glory—Hebrews 2:10*).

Jesus never disobeyed God's laws and would never ask us to. Instead, he even made the standards even higher in the New Covenant because our consciences and spirits are now regenerated through the sacrifice of his blood. This is something the blood of bulls and goats could not do (*Hebrews 10:4)*.

"He saved us, not by works in righteousness that we did, but according to His mercy, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Titus 3:5

Do not be deceived by those who claim the moral law doesn't apply to us. God does not change. What he hated before, he hates now; his holiness never changes, and God does not change his mind like men do. *"I AM GOD; I CHANGE NOT" (Malachi 3:6).* Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." Matthew 24:35*. God's words do not fall to the ground.

Paul, who was the great teacher of grace, emphasizes this and says, *"Do we then make* ***void*** *(nullify) the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we* ***establish*** ***(****uphold****)*** *the law." Romans 3:31*. The law has not been nullified. The distinction Paul was always making is that we are not saved, justified, or sanctified through the law but through God's grace. But God's grace and the new birth enable us to obey God's commands.

Revere God's word

The word of God must be studied from Genesis to Revelation, with spiritual wisdom and understanding, to know the nature and character of God. We are in days of increasing deception where many are disobeying God's word and teaching others to do so, which Jesus warned about.

"So then, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do likewise will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever practices and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:19

You Are Eternal. Where Shall You Spend Eternity?

There is no annihilation of human beings taught in the Bible. The lake of fire is eternal, and so are the new earth and new heavens. These two places are the final dwelling places of all human beings whom God has ever created and who have existed. Every human being has the breath of God in him. That is what enlivens his body, which is dust. When God created the first man, Adam, he breathed into him, and Adam became a living soul (being).

"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." Genesis 2:7

What makes us alive is the breath of God in us, and that breath is eternal. No one exists or lives without God, not even the wicked, and not even Satan and his angels, because God created them all and gave them life. There is no life without Jesus. He created all things. It is therefore impossible and foolish for someone to think they can exist independent of God. He made us for his purpose. Mankind was made in God's image to reflect the nature of God and his Son, Jesus Christ.

"You hide Your face, they are troubled; You take away their breath, they die and return to their dust." Psalm 104:29

Souls are eternal.

The breath of God cannot be annihilated or die. Souls are eternal. There is no living thing that God has made that shall cease to exist because God's breath is in man. But they will live forever in some form because physical death shall also be thrown into the lake of fire (*Revelation 20:14)*. The lake of fire is called the second death. It is eternal separation from God in a state of immortality in the resurrected body.

God prepared the lake of fire for Satan and his angels according to *Matthew 25:41*. Angels already have eternal bodies and cannot die. Human beings will all experience the resurrection of their bodies in the end and receive immortal bodies. This will happen during the resurrection of the righteous when Jesus returns and the resurrection of the wicked after his millennial reign.

"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12:2

"Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." Philippians 3:21

The resurrection of the dead

Jesus is the resurrection and life (*John 11:25*). All the dead shall resurrect by his power (*John 5:28-29*). The righteous shall have glorious bodies, but the wicked shall have immortal bodies for eternal damnation in the lake of fire. The Bible doesn't get into details about what kind of bodies these will be.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." 1 Corinthians 15:42-45

"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." John 5:26-29

Eternal bodies after the resurrection

The soul is eternal, but the body shall be immortal at the resurrection, as was originally meant to be when God created Adam. God's original plan shall never fail. He shall have a remnant who fulfill his original intent when he has rooted out all evil from the earth and banished them from his presence forever. The righteous shall receive glorified bodies like that of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone, at last, will receive immortal bodies, which will live forever with God or be separated from God. Human beings who have rejected God as their father and have chosen all their lives to follow his enemy, Satan, by their rebellious thoughts, hearts, wills, and lives, will share the devil's fate by spending eternity separated from God in the lake of fire (*Revelation 20:15, Romans 1:21, Genesis 6:5, Ephesians 4:17-18, Colossians 3:6)*.

"The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever." Revelation 20:10

"The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:13-15

God shall be glorified in the eternal destiny of the righteous and just.

No one gets to escape God's justice by ceasing to exist. What God has made shall endure forever. He made man and angels to live forever. Even in the eternal destruction of the wicked, God shall be glorified because his righteous judgments shall be fulfilled, and the Lord Jesus's enemies shall be made his footstool. There will be eternal justice for those who rejected His Son's sacrifice on the cross.

"The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" Psalm 110:1

"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 10:28

"These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed." 2 Thessalonians 1:9-10

God shall make all things new.

The earth and heavens will pass away in their present form and be transformed when God creates the new heavens and new earth. God will literally make all things new. The earth will be renewed, and God's holy fire will burn up all that is not of him. He will make creation perfect again once sin, death, the devil, and all sinners are taken away to the lake of fire. Peter says that we are looking to new heavens and a new earth where righteousness dwells (*2 Peter 3:13*).

"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband … Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End." Revelation 21:1-3, 5-6

The Great Hope of the Resurrection: 7 Glorious Truths!

Do you know there will be a resurrection of all the dead one day at the end of the age? After that, each person will go to their eternal destination. We often hear much taught about the death of Jesus for our sins. However, we rarely hear teachings on what his resurrection means for our future resurrection from the dead.

Below are 7 glorious truths about the resurrection of the dead and why it is the great hope of all believers in Jesus Christ:

1. There shall be a resurrection of both the righteous and wicked.

The Bible makes it clear that all the dead shall rise at the end of the age. Jesus said that those who have done good (*those who believe in him)* will experience the **resurrection of life**. And those who have done evil (*rejected him*) will experience the **resurrection of judgment**. The first group will have **eternal life** in heaven in their resurrected, glorified physical bodies. The latter will face **eternal death** and separation from the God they rejected in the lake of fire. This will be in their resurrected and eternal physical bodies.

"Do not be amazed at this, for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear His voice and come out—those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment." John 5:28-29

Paul said in his defense before Governor Felix, *"And I have the same hope in God that they themselves cherish, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (Acts 24:15).*

There shall be **two resurrections** at separate times. The righteous shall rise first and reign with Christ during the millennium before the judgment day. That is the first resurrection *(Revelation 20:5-6)*. On the day of judgment, the wicked shall rise. This will be after the 1,000-year reign of Christ. They will then be cast into the lake of fire *(Revelation 21:1–8)*.

Sadly, the wicked shall die twice: physically here on earth and eternally in the lake of fire.

2. The resurrection is an utter defeat of the power of Satan and his power over death.

Jesus did not only die to save us from our sins. He also died to destroy the devil, who held the power of death since the fall of Adam. Jesus came to free humanity from the power of death as well as the power of sin.

Jesus took on a human body and died on the cross for mankind's sins. He then rose from the dead on the third day. By his resurrection, he effectually conquered death and its power, which had kept mankind in torment and bondage for 4,000 years. *Hebrews 2:14-15* says, "*Now since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity, so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death*." There was no hope for life beyond death before Jesus came to earth.

3. Jesus took the keys of hell and of death.

In his revelation to John the Apostle, the Lord Jesus told him, *"I am he that liveth, and **was dead**; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and **have the keys of hell** and of **death**" (Revelation 1:18)*. Jesus's sacrifice on the cross was an utter defeat of Satan and all the power he exercised over mankind since they gave their dominion to him by sinning against God. Satan had a claim to the souls of mankind because of sin; death and hell were his power over mankind. Jesus died to reconcile us back to God by taking the keys of hell and death from Satan.

Jesus rescues those who believe and trust in him from the power of hell and death. He grants them eternal life, freeing them from the power of death. Death will be conquered once and for all at the final resurrection. It will then be cast into the lake of fire. *"The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26). "**Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death**" (Revelation 20:14).*

"When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come to pass: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory. Where, O Death, is your victory? Where, O Death, is your sting?'" 1 Corinthians 15:54-55

4. Jesus is the firstborn from the dead, and we will rise after him.

Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. *"And He is the head of the body, the church; He is the beginning and **firstborn from among the dead,** so that in all things He may have preeminence" (Colossians 1:18).*

Paul also refers to him as the **first fruits** of those who have died. Jesus did not just resurrect from the dead alone. God raised him from the dead, demonstrating what would thereafter happen to those who believe in him, of whom Jesus is the firstborn. Jesus died to bring many more sons to the Father *(Hebrews 2:10)*. He is our firstborn brother. What happened to him will happen to us as well at the end of the age. All who die in Christ will be raised from the dead. They will have glorified bodies like their firstborn brother. Hallelujah!

*"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so **in Christ all will be made alive**. But each in his own turn: Christ the firstfruits; then at His coming, those who belong to Him." 1 Corinthians 15:20-23*

In his defense before King Agrippa, Apostle Paul also said, *"But I have had God's help to this day, and I stand here to testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen: that the Christ would suffer, and as the **first to rise from the dead**, would proclaim light to our people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22-23).*

5. Our faith is futile without the resurrection of the dead.

The cornerstone of the Christian faith is the **death and resurrection** of Jesus Christ. The resurrection is so central to the faith that the Apostle Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthian church, wrote that our faith is futile without it. We are to be pitied more than all men if our hope in Christ is for **this life only**.

On the contrary, our hope in Christ is mainly for the world to come, where we will spend eternity. Not only will we rise from the dead and receive glorified physical bodies, but we will live forever in the new heaven and new earth that God has prepared for the righteous.

"If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is worthless, and so is your faith. In that case, we are also exposed as false witnesses about God. For we have testified about God that He raised Christ from the dead,

but He did not raise Him if in fact the dead are not raised. ***For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised****. And if Christ has not been raised,* ***your faith is futile****; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.* ***If our hope in Christ is for this life alone****,* ***we are to be pitied more than all men****." 1 Corinthians 15:13-19*

6. Our born-again loved ones are asleep and not dead. We shall see them again at the resurrection.

In *1 Thessalonians 4*, Apostle Paul offers some wonderful words of hope and comfort regarding those who die in Christ. He tells us not to mourn over our saved loved ones as those who have no hope. This is because we will see them again at the resurrection. As such, he says they are asleep, not dead.

Paul reminds us that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and Jesus will bring them at his coming, and those of us who are alive at his coming will meet them in the air. What a glorious reunion that will be!

"Brothers, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who ***sleep in death****,* ***so that you will not grieve like the rest, who are without hope****. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we also believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him. By the word of the Lord, we declare to you that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and* ***the dead in Christ will be the first to rise****. After that,* ***we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air****. And so we will always be with the Lord.* ***Therefore, encourage one another with these words****." 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

7. The resurrection is the believer's great hope and expectation.

The hope of rising from the dead one day and receiving our incorruptible resurrected bodies is the great hope of the believer. Believers will not live eternally with Jesus as spirits but in our glorified **physical** bodies. God will restore everything to how it was before Adam and Eve sinned. He will make all things new. He will create a new heaven and a new earth, and we shall live forever in our glorified bodies. The resurrection was the apostle Paul's greatest ambition and desire.

"To know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from out of the dead." Philippians 3:10-11

"But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to subject all things to Himself, will transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body." Philippians 3:20-21

*"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. '**He will wipe away every tear from their eyes,' and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the former things have passed away**.' And the One seated on the throne said, "**Behold, I make all things new**." Then He said, "Write this down, for these words are faithful and true." And He told me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give freely from the spring of the water of life. The one who overcomes will **inherit all things**, and I will be his God, and he will be My son." Revelation 21:1-7*

Do you want to be part of the first resurrection?

God has prepared a wonderful future and eternity for those who love him. I pray that none of us shall miss heaven. Have you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? He is the only way to heaven and to experience the first resurrection of the just.

"Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years." Revelation 20:6

Are You Ready for God's Final Judgment?

When you stand before God on the day of judgment, you will be ALONE. Your pastor, sister, brother, mother, children, husband, and friends will not be there. Just as you came alone into this world, your eternal destination will be determined when you stand alone before God.

"Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." Acts 17:30-31

On earth, you may seek to hide behind people and find solace in groups and popular or trending belief systems, but on that great day when we all stand before our maker to give account for our lives, we will each be alone. The standard for God's judgment shall be his word and the Lord Jesus Christ, and not our opinions, ideas, popular opinion, or membership to popular groups.

The Bible says that the books will be open and everyone shall be judged based on what is written therein. Then where will we hide or go? My friend, let us fear God and seek to please him only because a day is coming when all sinners and hypocritical Christians will be cast into the Lake of Fire for eternity.

This life is a vapor; here today, and gone tomorrow. Have you ever thought about your eternal destination?

God has provided a way for us to be reconciled back unto him by his love: Jesus Christ the Savior. He took the penalty of our sins on the cross so that we may have eternal life through him.

Work out YOUR OWN SALVATION with fear and trembling as the bible says. Do not leave it in anyone's hands. Not even a "man of God". You'll stand before Jesus on judgment day alone. "*My pastor said*, or *my friends said*" will not be an excuse on that great day. Read the word, do what it says, pray and seek Jesus, and abide in him. The truth will set you free! Jesus is the WAY, TRUTH, and LIFE, not any human. In these days of great deception, be like the Bereans whom Apostle Paul preached to, and they searched the scriptures to see if what he taught them was true. Hand no man the key to your eternal life. Remember the words of the Lord Jesus:

"Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown." Revelation 3:11

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Philippians 2:12

"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:12-15

Return Backsliders! Jesus is Calling You!

The Lord Jesus calls all backsliders to return to him and the covenant of salvation they had with him while there is still time. He says, "*Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings (Jeremiah 3:22).*"

The Lord Jesus is coming back soon and calling all his children to come back to him. It is not his will for any to perish, and especially not those who once walked with him. The torments of hell will be worse for those who knew the truth and left it.

"For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there ***no longer*** *remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire that will consume the adversaries." Hebrews 10:26-27*

Backsliders, Jesus still loves you. He will heal your backsliding if you come back unto him.

*"****Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings****. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God." Jeremiah 3:22*

For many years, I was backslidden. I was under the judgment of God and the relentless attacks of the enemy to take me to hell. But the Lord Jesus was merciful unto me. He opened my eyes before it was too late. My testimony is evidence that the Lord's words are true, he will heal your backslidings if you turn back to him. It is not too late backsliders. As long as you are alive, you still have a chance to return to him.

The Lord is married to the backsliders

"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for ***I am married unto you****: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Jeremiah 3:14*

When we turn to the Lord Jesus in salvation, we become one with him. "*But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17).* In this union we become his bride and are betrothed to him. It is a spiritual marriage covenant and the Lord takes it seriously. This is why Apostle Paul told the Corinthian believers when they were going astray, *"I have* ***betrothed*** *you to one husband,* ***that I may present you as a chaste virgin to*** **Christ***" (2 Corinthians 11:2).*

In the book of *Ephesians chapter 5,* Paul compared the relationship between a man and his wife, to that of Christ and his church. *Revelation 19:7* talks about the wedding of Jesus Christ and his holy bride (believers who stay devoted to him until he returns).

Backsliding is adultery

When a born-again believer backslides, they have effectually committed adultery and cheated on the Lord Jesus. It is a grave sin. Apostle James says in *James 4:4, "Ye **adulterers** and **adulteresses**, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God*?" When we go back to the world, we have broken our covenant with Jesus and taken on another lover. It breaks his heart.

But because Jesus does not go back on his love and covenant with us, he still stretches out his hand to his adulterous wife willing to forgive her. The book of Hosea is a perfect demonstration of this. God asked the Prophet Hosea to marry an adulterous wife to demonstrate God's relationship with wayward Israel in the life of the prophet. God says in *Hosea 14:4* concerning adulterous Israel, *"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for **mine anger is turned away** from him."*

If we repent and turn back to Jesus at any time in our backsliding, he will forgive us. He is a faithful husband. No adulterers shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.

The problem is that many Christians do not think that spiritual adultery is as real as physical sexual adultery but it is all the same. At salvation, we were united with Christ. To violate this separates us from him forever.

The danger of dying as a backslider

The devil does not want you to turn back to Jesus. Your backsliding is the will of Satan. He wants you for himself, that you may spend eternity in hell with him as his bride. He will do everything it takes to keep you from turning back to Jesus. You need to know that. There is a literal war over your soul and Satan is not out for your good. The Backslider is in grave danger. Satan knows that God hates adultery and will try to make you die in that state.

*"Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, **nor adulterers**… **will inherit the kingdom of God**" 1 Corinthians 6:9-10*

The choice is yours: who will you serve?

As long as you turn back to Jesus, he will forgive you and redeem you.

"Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion." Jeremiah 3:14

You get to choose. If you reject Jesus and die in adultery, then you will be separated from him forever. As a result, you will go where your lover, the devil, whom you have chosen, will—to hell. Adultery breaks a marriage covenant according to scripture. It was the only reason Jesus gave that allowed for divorce. However, as long as the husband and wife are alive, reconciliation is still possible. But if an adulterer dies in that state, then they die separated from their husband.

It is not possible to have two husbands according to scripture. This is a sin. We must choose. Jesus or the devil. If we choose Jesus, acknowledge what we have done, repent, and ask him for forgiveness, he will. But we have to devote ourselves to him thereafter as a faithful bride.

I will love you freely; I will heal your backslidings

*"I **will heal** their backsliding, **I will love them** freely: for **mine anger is turned** away from him." Hosea 14:4*

*"**Return**, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our God." Jeremiah 3:22*

Jesus is gracious. He is merciful and forgiving. He delights in showing mercy. If his wayward bride returns to him again, he promises to forgive and heal. He will love you FREELY. What amazing grace. However, if the backslider rejects him and chooses their other lovers, they will perish. And this will be their own free will choice, not the Lords. Choose him today. Tell him, "***Behold I come unto you, for you are the Lord my God."***

The wedding of the lamb is near

Jesus is coming back soon just as he promised! The wedding of the lamb mentioned in *Revelation 19* is near. It is not too late for you backslider to renew your covenant with the Lord and be his bride on that day. It takes only humble and sincere repentance and a renewal of your vows to the Lord.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Revelation 19:7-8

"Nevertheless, I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent." Revelation 2:4-5

Genuine Repentance and Restitution Are Key to Total Deliverance

True repentance is a key to deliverance or freedom from any form of bondage and sin. Genuine salvation means repentance, turning away from the old way of life of slavery to sin and the devil, to follow Jesus as savior from sin and Lord of our lives. Jesus and the apostles preached repentance from sin. One must repent to be born again.

"From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matthew 4:17

"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:15

"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." Luke 13:3

True repentance includes restitution.

True repentance also includes restitution. Repentance is not just saying sorry but a complete and total turning away from sin. Restitution in the Bible, from the Hebrew word "*shalam*," *expresses the act of making amends, restoring, repaying, and bringing something to a full, satisfactory conclusion—whether by paying a debt, restoring what was lost, rewarding righteousness, or settling hostility so that peace prevails.*

Repentance and restitution are indispensable keys to victory in the Christian walk and accelerated spiritual growth. One should do both the moment they get born again and believe in the Lord Jesus for salvation.

Repentance and restitution free you from the weight of sin.

Sin is a weight that will slow you down and rob you of God's true blessing and favor. God doesn't bless sin. God's blessings are not only material; they are mainly spiritual. Material wealth is not a sufficient measure of God's blessing because even sinners are wealthy.

Spiritual blessings are the true wealth God gives his children. This is evidenced by a life of victory over sin, the world, and the enemy, and supernatural wisdom, joy, peace, glory, and grace. And the greatest spiritual blessing that sin robs us of is eternal life. The Bible says*, "Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).*

Repentance restores our relationship and peace with our fellow men.

Repentance is also a way of making peace with those we have offended. By this, we then have a clear conscience before God and men. This is very important to God and is a sign of true holiness. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus and the apostles emphasize that God expects us (as far as it depends on us) to live at peace with all men.

"Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny." Matthew 5:23-26

"For whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.'" 1 Peter 3:11

"Therefore, let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." Romans 14:19

"If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men." Romans 12:18

"Keeping a clear conscience, so that those who slander you may be put to shame by your good behavior in Christ." 1 Peter 3:16

Repentance restores our relationship and peace with God.

We cannot have peace with God while we have conflicts with others or have offended others. In fact, Apostle Paul in *Acts 24* says that because there is a coming day of resurrection and final judgment, he strives to live with a clear conscience so that he can share in the resurrection of the righteous and not the wicked.

"And I have the same hope in God that they themselves cherish, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. In this hope, I strive always to maintain a clear conscience before God and man." Acts 24:15-16

"Pursue peace with all, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14

When Israel disobeyed God, he would withdraw his presence from them and hand them over to their enemies. But when they repented and obeyed Him, God would give them rest from their enemies and victory in battle. Rest, victory, joy, wisdom, grace, glory, and peace are the true blessings from God that living in sin robs one of. There is no peace for the wicked.

"But in keeping with God's promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, as you anticipate these things, make every effort to be found at peace— spotless and blameless in His sight." 2 Peter 3:13-14

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." Matthew 5:9

8 steps to true and complete repentance

Repent and make restitution today. And then live righteously and holy by God's grace, which just means obeying God's word. Your life will have victory because the enemy will have nothing in you. And when He comes against you from the outside, you'll have the power to fight him. But it's hard to overcome an enemy who is already within you.

"We know that anyone born of God does not keep on sinning; the One who was born of God (Jesus Christ) PROTECTS HIM, and the EVIL ONE CANNOT touch him. We know that we are of God, and that the whole world is under the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true—in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:18-21

Below are 8 steps to follow for true and complete repentance.

1. Readiness and Willingness

Be ready and willing to do whatever it takes to be free. Total surrender to God, a posture of humility and brokenness, and desperation are key.

"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." Isaiah 1:19-20

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise." Psalm 51:17

2. Acknowledge and confess all sin.

Acknowledge and confess sins, mentioning them all to God fully without hiding or excuses. God desires truth and honesty. He sees all and knows all, and we cannot deceive him.

"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy." Proverbs 28:13

"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom." Psalm 51:5-6

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

3. Renounce connections to sin.

Renounce in prayer any connection to any person, covenant, relationship, or object connected to sin.

"Therefore, say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations.'" Ezekiel 14:6

"Thus says the LORD: "Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good." Jeremiah 18:11

"Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work." 2 Timothy 2:21

4. Cut off and get rid of all connections to sin.

Cut off and get rid of any object, relationship, or person connected to sin.

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for

you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell." Matthew 5:27-30

"Therefore, come out from among them and be separate," says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." 2 Corinthians 6:17

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." Psalm 1:1-2

"Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her, be clean, you who bear the vessels of the LORD." Isaiah 52:11

5. Forsake all sin.

Be willing to forsake the sin totally and obey God moving forward. No turning back.

"Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." Isaiah 55:6-7

"Therefore, submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." James 4:7-10

6. Make restitution to complete repentance.

Make any restitution needed for the sins. This is crucial to fully closing any open doors to the devil and being completely free from sin and offense.

"Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." Luke 19:8-10

"Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on

the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny." Matthew 5:23-26

7. Live a holy and consecrated life after repentance.

Live a fully consecrated and holy life after this. Give no place to the devil by opening the door to sin.

"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." Romans 12:1

"Because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." 1 Peter 1:16

"For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness." 1 Thessalonians 4:7

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality." 1 Thessalonians 4:3

"Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God." Leviticus 20:7

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14

8. Fasting for repentance and deliverance

In some cases, fasting should be added to repentance to demonstrate humility, sorrow, and self-affliction before God, and increase faith for deliverance.

"Now, therefore," says the Lord, "turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Joel 2:12-13

"However, this kind (of unclean spirit) does not go out except by prayer and fasting." Matthew 17:21

What gives demons access to bind and torment a person is open doors.

Once the doors and links to demons are shut, they have no legal right to access your life. The spiritual world works with legalities.

"And do not give the devil a foothold." Ephesians 4:27

Most people want to be prayed for but are not willing to disconnect from sin. It does not matter if all the anointed people lay hands on you and pray for deliverance; if you do not cut connections with the sin (*and affiliated connections of people, relationships, habits, objects, covenants, etc.*), the demons will keep coming back. You can't trick demons with prayer if you have their property or are in their territory. **Anointing cannot replace repentance**.

Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.

Jesus said if a person (represented by a **house**) is left empty, meaning the doors of sin are still open and there is no new occupant, the demons will come back with seven stronger ones. The new occupant has to be someone stronger, who is the Lord Jesus Christ. And this can only be through absolute and complete surrender to him as Lord and master of your life.

Jesus told the man who had been paralyzed for 38 years, "*See, you have been made well. **Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you"** (John 5:14).* Sin is the cause of most oppression, and the danger in going back to sin after freedom is that the demons will come back with 7 stronger demons to make sure you don't evict them again (*Matthew 12:43-45*).

"When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation." Matthew 12:43-45

Most demonic oppression ends when sin is completely cut off.

True freedom from any bondage needs complete surrender to God, radical honesty, self-examination, thorough repentance and restitution, and, in some cases, research and investigation to get to the root of the matter. There are no shortcuts with God. Repent!

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage." Galatians 5:1

"Come now, and let us reason together." Says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:18

"Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." John 8:11

Satan Is a Legalist—Sin Gives Him Legal Rights

There is a spiritual war going on for the souls of men. The devil is working hard to capture as many souls as he can through legal rights. The spiritual world works through open doors and legalities. Sin and disobedience to God are what give him this legal right over souls. He is the father of all who sin. Sin originated from the devil, who was the first sinner and rebel against God.

All who sin, the Bible calls the children of the devil. He was a sinner from the beginning and taught man to sin. When we live in unrepentant sin, we give him a legal right to access our lives. He can then infiltrate, harass, and torment us and lead us further from God through multiplied temptations. Because sin is his property, when we live in unrepentant sin, we give him a legal right over us.

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8

God honors these legalities of the Spirit realm because they originated from him. He is a God of justice and righteousness. God is bound by his holiness and his word. God has nothing to do with sin, because he is holy. When we sin, we take ourselves into the domain of the devil and become his property. Sin separates us from God because he is holy. God accepts and recognizes us as his own when we turn to the Lord Jesus and live in obedience to him in holiness.

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; mercy and truth go before Your face." Psalm 89:14

"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." Isaiah 59:2

"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Habakkuk 1:13

Does Satan have a legal claim over you?

An unbeliever already belongs to the devil whether they know it or accept it or not. They are already in sin's grip. Therefore, he has the right to oppress them and keep them in bondage. And eventually lead them to hell. Satan does not bother too much with those who have not turned to Jesus because they are already his. However, he fights greatly against born-again believers. His goal is to get them to sin against the Lord so he can win them back to himself. Through sin he can have the open door and legal right to attack and enter their lives.

"And do not give the devil an opportunity (place; foothold)." Ephesians 4:27

Living in sin is like sleeping with your door open at night. It opens the door for animals, thieves, burglars, and all manner of criminals to enter in. When we live in sin, we open doors in the Spirit for the devil and his demons to access our lives. We therefore cannot have any authority over Satan

when he has a legal claim over us. When his property is in our houses (body, soul, mind, and spirit), he has a right to be there.

Jesus said that a house divided against itself cannot stand *(Matthew 12:25)*. Satan cannot cast out Satan *(Matthew 12:25).* A Christian living in unrepentant sin cannot have any authority over Satan and his demons since they mark him as one of theirs.

Please note that living in sin disconnects you from God, and you cannot enter heaven because you belong to

the devil. No unclean thing can enter heaven. Be alert and sober-minded. Watch and pray lest you enter into temptation. Sin must be your number one enemy as a Christian because the consequences are eternal.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter 5:8

Master sin to gain victory over Satan.

When Cain wanted to kill his brother, God warned him. He told him sin was lurking at his door and he must master it. But sadly, Cain did not. He allowed Satan to enter him, and his end was destruction. We see in the life of Judas also what happens when one allows Satan to enter him and lure him into sin. The goal of Satan is ultimately to lead souls to hell.

We have to be careful and watch over our souls and resist sin at all costs and live repentant, holy lives. We can master sin by developing a close relationship with the Lord Jesus through obedience, studying his word, self-denial, praying, and fasting.

"And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." Genesis 4:7

The Bible also tells us to be angry but sin not lest we give a place or opportunity to the devil. It admonishes us to not let the sun go down on our anger, meaning we should make our ways right with God and all we are offended by through repentance and forgiveness. If we do this, we will not give place to the devil, who is always looking for someone to devour.

"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil." Ephesians 4:26-27

Satan accuses you to the Father in heaven.

The Bible calls Satan the accuser of the brethren. He accuses us before God, day and night. We see this demonstrated when he went before God, accusing Job and asking permission to test him

(Job chapter 1). The Bible also shows us Satan accusing Joshua the high priest before God. *(Zechariah 3:1-10)*

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:10-11

The devil is always looking to accuse us so he can afflict us and torment us with diseases, bondage to sin, lethargy, accidents, afflictions, strife in relationships, etc. Do not give Satan evidence to accuse you!

Jesus, our example—He gave no place to the devil and so had authority over him.

Jesus did not give any opportunity for Satan to oppress him or overpower him because he lived in absolute holiness. When the devil tempted him in the wilderness, he was able to overcome him because he was filled with the word of God, had been fasting and praying, and always had a desire to please the Father and do his will. Because of his perfect obedience to the Father, he has authority to rebuke Satan, and Satan left him *(Matthew 4:10-11).*

"Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and ***hath nothing*** *in me." John 14:30*

Because of the Lord's obedience, holiness, and sinlessness, he was able to be the perfect atonement for our sins. Jesus gave himself as an example for us. He said the devil had nothing on him. This means Satan could find nothing in Jesus to accuse him of or find entrance into his life. The great power and authority Jesus had was because of his sinless nature. No demon was a match for Jesus. They all bowed before him and recognized him whenever he came near demon-possessed people, and he was able to cast them out.

Holiness denies Satan legal rights over you.

Satan and his demons only obey Christians living in HOLINESS and OBEDIENCE to God. Trying to rebuke the devil when you are living in sin and carrying his property in your house and your body only causes him to laugh at you. You cannot chase away someone you have made a co-owner of your house because they have legal rights over you. Your prayers will always be powerless when you're living in sin.

God cannot save you from Satan's oppression when you're the one giving him the right to torment you and will not turn away from your sins. He will always have authority to accuse you before God and prevail. Confess all your sins to God, repent and turn from them, and then purpose to live

a holy life. That is submitting to God. When you do that, you can then resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7

Give no place to the devil, beloved!

The Glorious Liberty of the Children of God

The root cause of most human problems and suffering is sin. Sin places people in yokes of bondage, misery, dysfunction, and slavery. Solutions offered by the world and most religions revolve around dealing with the symptoms of sin and "trying" to be a good person but cannot deal with the ROOT, which is the sin nature in all mankind. Sin has an insidious effect on all creation since sin is not purely personal. We are all very much affected by one another's sins.

The sin nature we all inherit from Adam ensures we are slaves to sin, whether we want to or not. Apostle Paul, in the book of Romans, which has the greatest teachings on sin, its causation, and its cure, says, "*For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Romans 7:19-20*

The problem of sin and the solution to sin are what distinguish Christianity from all other religions. Only Jesus offers a permanent solution to the corrupt nature in man through the work of the cross.

Jesus Christ is the only person who has provided a permanent solution to the sin problem. The death and resurrection of Jesus permanently rendered sin powerless in the body. In his body, Jesus dealt with the power of sin, and at his resurrection, he defeated the power of death and hell once and for all. The Bible says he took the keys of death and hell.

Jesus puts to death the sin nature in those who believe in him and his work on the cross and his atonement. He imputed his righteousness on that one, he believes.

"For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful man, as an offering for sin. He thus condemned sin in the flesh." Romans 8:3

The person who repents of the old life and believes fully in Jesus is given NEW BIRTH and made a NEW CREATION. This new creation is not a figure of speech but an actual regeneration that happens to the sinner when the Spirit of Jesus comes to reside in him. He is made brand new.

"Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

The old desires and lusts are crucified with Christ, and he is given a new nature that's no longer under slavery to sin but a slave to righteousness. It is a spiritual rebirth that's real and effective.

"We know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be rendered powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." Romans 6:6

God's nature in the true Christian makes him one who no longer desires sin but yearns for righteousness since his nature has been changed. The yoke of bondage is broken by Jesus in those who trust him. The chains of captivity to sin, dysfunction, the lusts of the flesh, and worldliness are dealt with as one continues to abide in the life-giving vine that is Christ Jesus. The fruit of the Christian is righteousness and holiness.

"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." Romans 6:19

Every day in the Christian who continues to abide in Christ, the Holy Spirit continues this sanctifying work, transforming him to be like Christ from glory to glory until the end, when the Christian's final redemption occurs at the resurrection of the physical body.

This is what God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit accomplish in the born-again children of God. It is a glorious and powerful work that cannot be done any other way. And this is why Jesus can boldly claim to be the ONLY WAY to the Father; he is the only one who came down from heaven to redeem man and the only one who transforms sinners into saints and qualifies them for heaven. He does the work. What a glorious savior!

The Christian life is not one of "trying" to be moral; it is one of rebirth and recreation. We cannot be purely moral people on our own because we have a corrupt nature. Jesus dealt with the sin problem on the cross, and he said, "*It is finished*!"

Have you experienced this new life in Christ? It's available for whosoever comes to him by faith! Repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will experience this liberty that only he offers to his children—those who are born again.

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:2

"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Galatians 6:15

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration (new birth) and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Titus 3:5

"If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Ephesians 4:21-24

"Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." Colossians 3:9-10

"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For in Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set you free from the law of sin and death." Romans 8:1-2

Growing as a Disciple of Jesus Christ

The Bible says if you are saved, you are a new creature (*2 Corinthians 5:17*). Therefore, your old nature and life are gone, and you are born again. You're now a child of God. The Holy Spirit now lives in you and will empower you to live a godly life. However, nurturing your new life of salvation is important. You're like a baby that needs to grow by consuming the right food. There are things you must do to grow in your relationship with Jesus.

"But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." 2 Peter 3:18

Below are four basic things you need to do to grow in your faith. These essentials will start you on the journey to learning more and growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ:

1. Bible reading

You will chiefly grow in your relationship with God by studying the Bible, which is the word of God, daily. The Bible contains God's will, commandments, instructions, desires, and promises for us. Read it out loud if possible. Start with the Gospels (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*) to learn the recorded teachings of Jesus Christ, as this will help you know what Jesus taught about the kingdom of God and being his disciple.

After the gospel books, read the rest of the New Testament book by book, followed by the Old Testament. God's word helps us know him and his will for our lives.

Don't only read the word of God; read with the desire and determination to OBEY everything you read. It is obedience that will help you become spiritually strong, mature, and productive in your Christian walk.

"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." 1 Peter 2:2

"That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." Ephesians 5:26

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." Psalm 119:105

2. Prayer

Pray daily and talk with Jesus about everything as your friend, Lord, and savior, and you will learn to hear and know his voice and obey him. He will speak back to you. Remember, Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, lives inside you now and is with you always. The Holy Spirit will help you and teach you how to pray and direct your life.

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

"Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving." Colossians 4:2

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

3. Daily devotion (Quiet time)

Daily devotion time, also known as **quiet time**, is a set-aside time each day where a born-again believer spends time studying and meditating on the word of God, praying, and communing with God. I would advise you to spend at least one hour in daily devotion for maximum benefits (*half an hour studying the word and half an hour in prayer*) and increase the time as you grow in faith and discipline.

Morning hours are the best time before you begin your day. Spending time with God before anything else sets the pace for the rest of the day; it also shows our devotion to giving God the best and first of everything we have. Adjust your waking time in the morning to factor in time with God, and watch how it changes and improves your life. You can also have your devotional time in the evening if this works best for you; just make it consistent to make it a habit.

4. Fellowship

Pray to be led to a **Bible-believing** and **Bible-teaching** gathering of fellow believers you can fellowship with, grow with, and serve God and one another. Ask God to direct you to the right church that's rooted in his word, discipleship, and preaching the gospel. It is important to pray about this so that you do not join a false church.

It is important to be part of a gathering of believers because you are now a member of the body of Christ and the family of God. Growth is easier in a community.

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

7 Keys to Spiritual Growth from the Life of Jesus

The Christian life is not static but one of progressive spiritual growth into the **image of Christ**. It says in *Romans 8:29* that "*whom he (God) did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren*." God has predestined us born-again believers to be like Jesus, our Lord, Savior, and firstborn brother; this is our destiny. The disciples of Christ are called to be like him in all ways.

"The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord." Matthew 10:24-25

God's ultimate goal for the body of Christ is for us to grow into maturity, which is the fullness of Christ. And we can only do this by imitating his life and lifestyle.

"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13

Spiritual Growth Is Deliberate, Not Accidental

Although he was God incarnate, Jesus, while in his earthly form, maintained a life of spiritual discipline. It is no wonder that in 3 years of ministry, he was able to accomplish all that he did. If Jesus had to exercise spiritual discipline, though he was God in the flesh, what about us who are human? We see in the life of Jesus the diligent and consistent use of spiritual practices. These have been revealed for our example as a template for spiritual growth.

Jesus modeled for his 12 disciples and all his future disciples what we need to do to be spiritually mature, effective, and fruitful. And he did this practically by example. Jesus was not all talk, but his life was a living example of what his disciples should be like.

Below are 7 keys to spiritual growth revealed in the life of Jesus:

1. Studying and Meditating on the Word of God

From an early account we have of Jesus at age 12, we find him in the temple listening to the teachers of the law and asking them questions. The Bible says that all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. This proves that Jesus, already at that age, was devoted to the scriptures through interest, study, and discipline.

"And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting amid the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers." Luke 2:46.47

In his teachings, we find him quoting the Old Testament constantly from memory, referencing many scriptures and using them to reveal himself as the Messiah. For example, in *Luke 4:16*, we find Jesus reading from the prophet Isaiah in the temple and telling the hearers that this portion of scripture was fulfilled in him.

Some Benefits of God's Word

The word of God helps us love and obey Jesus (*John 14:15*), know the Father's will (*Matthew 7:20-22),* and have faith because faith comes from hearing the word of God (*Romans 10:17*). It also helps us become prosperous and successful (*Joshua 1:8),* reveals our faults (*James 1:22-24*), washes us clean, makes us holy (*Ephesians 5:26-27*), makes us wise (*Psalm 119:98-100*), is a sword to help us fight the devil (*Ephesians 6:1),* lights our path (*Psalm 119:105*), etc.

The benefits of the word of God listed above (and more) help us to grow spiritually into mature Christians. When we know and obey God's word, we become like houses built on the rock (*Matthew 7:24-27*) that cannot be shaken. Jesus is this rock; he is the word of God manifest, and we cannot know him without his word.

It is important for anyone who desires spiritual growth and to know the mind of God to study and meditate on God's word. It is a must; God commands it.

*"This Book of the Law **shall not** depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Joshua 1:8*

"As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby." 1 Peter 2:2

Get a free Bible reading plan.

I recommend downloading our excellent and flexible **One-Year Bible Reading Plans,** which will support you in studying your Bible. By reading a minimum of 4 chapters a day, it is possible to finish the entire Bible in **one year**. Check out and download your free one-year Bible reading plans **here**.

2. Prayer

Another important spiritual discipline Jesus practiced daily was prayer. Jesus was submitted to the Father. He constantly and consistently went away privately to pray to him for everything. He did not rely on his own strength but sought the Father's will and spent time communing with him.

During times of making important decisions or facing significant events, Jesus prayed. Before starting his ministry, Jesus spent 40 days in prayer and fasting in the wilderness (*Matthew 4:1-2*). The night before he chose his 12 disciples, Jesus spent all night in prayer (*Luke 6:12-13*). Jesus

prayed with great sorrow on the night he was arrested to be crucified; that was the last thing he did (*Matthew 26:36-42*).

When and Where Jesus Prayed

Sometimes he prayed while with his disciples (*Luke 9:18*) and even taught them how to pray (*Luke 11:1-4*). But Jesus usually hid himself away from the crowds and often sent them and his disciples away so that he could pray privately. He went to solitary places to pray by himself, usually in the wilderness and in the mountains, which seemed to be his favorite place to pray.

"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone." Matthew 14:23

Some of the recorded times that Jesus went away alone to pray were early in the morning before the day began, late into the night, in the evenings, and all night.

"And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." Mark 1:35

"And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Luke 6:12

Jesus was a man of prayer and intercession and prayed for his disciples. He even knew he would betray him (*Luke 22:31*). He taught us how to pray in *Matthew 6:5-8* because he expected us to pray.

Prayer Is Our Link to God

Prayer is our link of communion with the Father. God has ordained that he will not do anything without us praying. That is because it is how we establish a relationship and communion with him and activate our faith. God responds to faith in him. Our faith-filled prayers avail much.

Prayer keeps us connected to Jesus so that his life may keep flowing in and through us. He left us the Holy Spirit to help us pray (*Romans 8:26*). Prayer is communication and union with God. If we do not pray, our link to God is broken. As a result, we will find our spiritual growth stunted and start backsliding. Jesus kept his relationship with the Father going through prayer. This was the secret of his great life and ministry. He did not rely on himself but on his father in everything.

We are the branches, and Jesus is the vine. Without him, we can do nothing. We must stay close to him in prayer so he can constantly refresh, answer, and empower us.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing." John 15:5

3. Fasting

Jesus fasted for 40 days before starting his public ministry. The Bible tells us that after this fast, he returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee to begin preaching.

*"And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered…**And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee**: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about." Luke 4:1-2, 14*

Fasting is the practice of going without food, water, or both for some time to spend more time seeking God. It is a humbling of oneself before God. In fasting, we deny ourselves and our bodies what we crave and need so that we can dedicate that time to desiring God more. By fasting, we declare that we need God more than our very sustenance. It is an act of humility and self-denial that pleases God.

Fasting is powerful because it brings the flesh into subjection and strengthens the Spirit above it. Our faith and spiritual perception increase during fasting. This is because we are feeding ourselves mainly with God's word and prayer. As a result, we are more receptive to God and less doubtful, which positions us to receive. Fasting does not change God, nor is it a tool to manipulate God. But it works because when we humble ourselves, God exalts us.

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up." James 4:10

Jesus Taught on Fasting

In Jesus' first major public sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, he taught about fasting (*Matthew 6:16-18*). He fully expected his disciples to fast after his resurrection (*Matthew 9:14-16*). Jesus also mentioned that some demons could not be cast out except by fasting and praying. In such cases, fasting is needed to boost our faith (*Matthew 17:20-21*).

On another occasion, when the disciples of Jesus found him preaching to the Samaritan woman and urged him to eat, Jesus told them that he had food to eat that they knew not of. This passage implies that Jesus was fasting or had little interest in food, prioritizing the work of preaching the gospel to the lost (*John 4:31-33*). These words mirrored those he spoke to Satan when he tempted him to turn stones into bread while on his 40-day fast: *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* *Matthew 4:4*

Fasting helps with our spiritual growth because it strengthens our faith, helps us overcome our flesh, and cultivates temperance and humility (*meekness*) and the other fruits of the Spirit *(Galatians 5:22-23)*. It is also a restful, detoxifying, and healthy practice for our bodies, which are the temples of the Holy Spirit.

4. Giving and Ministering

Giving is an important key to spiritual growth, and it was an important part of Jesus' life. He was always giving. To be Christ-like, we must be givers who give ourselves to ministering to people around us. Giving is a key aspect of God's nature. He gave his most precious and beloved Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins (*John 3:16*). Our salvation is a sacrificial act of giving from God. Everywhere Jesus went, he did good and gave to the people around him.

He gave of his virtue and love by healing the sick, casting out demons, raising the dead, preaching daily to large multitudes without complaining, and meeting the physical needs of the people. Jesus twice miraculously fed crowds of 5,000 and 4,000 people, rather than let them go home hungry. One of Jesus' disciples was the treasurer who kept the money bag and was in charge of giving to the poor (*John 13:29*).

Jesus was full of compassion for people (*Mark 6:34-36)*. He gave his time, money, and power to serve others. And most importantly, he gave of himself by dying on the cross. If we desire to be like Jesus, we too must be givers and ministers.

Jesus made it clear that we are to give alms to the poor. It was one of his teachings in this first Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 6:1-4*). He also mentioned that whatever we do to the least among us (*the sick, hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, prisoners, etc*.) by ministering to their needs, we do to him (*Matthew 25:35-40*).

Freely you have received; freely give.

The more we give of ourselves and all that we have to God, the more Christ-like we become, and the virtues of God begin to manifest in us. We become a blessing to the world like our Father. Christians are called to give freely of all they have and are, because we have been given all things freely by God. "*Freely ye have received, freely give." Matthew 10:8*

"For even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto (served), but to minister (serve), and to give his life a ransom for many." Mark 10:45

When Jesus washed his disciples' feet, he told them he was setting an example for them that they should be servants rather than seek to be served.

"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." John 13:13-17

5. Evangelism/Preaching the gospel

Another important aspect of spiritual growth is evangelism and preaching the gospel. Jesus' entire life revolved around preaching the gospel, which is the good news of salvation through him. He devoted his 3-year ministry to this noble purpose. This in itself is a spiritual discipline that keeps one focused on God's kingdom and obeying the Great Commission.

Jesus dedicated himself to this single purpose. And he spent time teaching his disciples to do the same thing. Twice, we see him send forth his disciples two by two to preach the gospel on their own. He was training them to preach the gospel after he was gone.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." John 9:4

Preaching the Gospel Is for All Believers

When Jesus ascended to heaven, he left what is known as the ***Great Commission*** to his followers: "*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*." *Mark 16:15-16*, also *Matthew 28:18-20*

We are saved to go and share the good news with others, that they too might be saved. The Bible calls us ambassadors of Christ (*2 Corinthians 5:20*) sent to reconcile the world to him. Preaching the gospel is a charge Jesus gave to all his followers. It is a key to spiritual growth because by preaching the gospel and making disciples, we expose ourselves over and over to it, building our faith. It is also an act of obedience, and obedience to God leads to growth (what we sow, we reap).

When we dedicate ourselves to preaching the gospel, we are following in the footsteps of our master.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine." 2 Timothy 4:2

Preaching the gospel is also one of the parts of the **armor of God**. This means that preaching the gospel has the power to protect us from evil.

*"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand…nd your **feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace**." Ephesians 6:13, 15*

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death." Revelation 12:11

6. Fellowship

Fellowship is an important factor in spiritual growth. No man is an island. We are many members of ONE body: the body of Christ. No one can be a Christian and isolate themselves from their fellow believers. God is a family God. We see this demonstrated in the Godhead as well. God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one (*1 John 5:7*). We have been called into fellowship with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and one another.

Jesus, in his earthly life, went to the temple every Sabbath to fellowship with others and to attend the public reading of the scriptures. He too participated in the reading of scriptures in the temple. He also spent most of his time in fellowship with his disciples and those he taught, regularly visiting people's homes.

*"So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. **And as His custom was**, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read." Luke 4:16*

Fellowship Is Love and Unity

Jesus prayed for all his disciples in *John 17:20-23* that we would be one, just as he and the Father are one. Unity is important for growth. As we come together with fellow believers, we benefit from the collective faith of the brethren and also from one another's unique gifts and ministries. God also chooses to do certain things for us only in the gathering of the saints. Also, God has given us all differing gifts and ministries so that we may serve and depend on one another in loving submission (*read 1 Corinthians 12)*.

Apostle Paul encouraged us not to forsake assembling because it is a means of encouraging and building one another up, especially as we wait for the coming of the Lord. There is safety and strength in numbers; if one falls, another can lift him up. Holy communion, baptism, and other Christian activities can only effectively happen in fellowship.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." 2 Corinthians 13:14

7. Solitude and Rest

Lastly, we also see that as busy as Jesus was, he deliberately made time to withdraw himself from the multitudes and his disciples to rest and be in solitude. This took a lot of deliberate discipline because the crowds constantly followed Jesus around. If he can do it, so can we. Jesus used these

times of solitude to pray, meditate, and rest. No one has any excuse to claim to be too busy to rest and replenish the mind, soul, body, and spirit.

Jesus also withdrew himself from the crowd after John the Baptist was beheaded, taking time out to grieve this great prophet (*Matthew 14:13*).

"And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed." Luke 5:16

Jesus encouraged his disciples to rest after they came back from the preaching mission he sent them on in Mark 6. "*And he said unto them, come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat*." Mark 6:31

Spiritual and physical rest are important for spiritual growth. They allow us to recharge, refresh, reassess, and refocus our efforts. Working without any rest sets us up for failure, sin, and spiritual attacks. When we are exhausted, we are weak. God himself rested on the 7th day after 6 days of creation. He then instituted the **Sabbath** rest and made it a command to allow us to reflect and remember all that God has done for us.

"Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10

Make Spiritual Growth Your Ambition

Spiritual growth should be a way of life for us as children of God. We are to be growing daily into the likeness of our master, Jesus Christ. And as we grow, our fruitfulness for the kingdom of God increases.

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18

"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." John 15:8

Bible Illiteracy Is Not Acceptable for Christians

As Christians, we should not be illiterate about the Bible and the gospel. And yet, sadly, many Christians have very little knowledge of both. Many cannot explain the basics of the Christian faith. Many cannot articulate what salvation is, what the gospel is, and what Jesus did on the cross. They cannot explain why they do what they do as Christians or what it all means. For many, Christianity is just a religion.

Studying the Scriptures is not only for theologians or pastors, but for every child of God. The words of Jesus recorded in the Bible, the letters of Paul and the apostles, and the Old Testament historical record are not just for theologians. The Bible is a collection of teachings and the historical record of our God and faith. We should know our Lord's words as Christians and even delight in them. We cannot know God if we do not know our Scriptures.

With ready access to Bibles, even online and on mobile apps, we have no excuse. Even if Christians can't read, they can hear, and vice versa. It is only a tiny minority who are so physically limited that they cannot access the Bible in any form. The early Christians learned the Scriptures by hearing them. They did not have personal copies like we do, and yet they were not gospel-illiterate.

Bible illiteracy makes us prime for deception.

Many Christians are deceived and drawn into cults and false churches because they do not know God's Word. It is also very easy for one to become a false preacher if they are ignorant of what the Bible says. In these last days, we cannot afford to be ignorant about our faith, but must grow into maturity so we can stand!

Many Christians just don't value the gospel message and God's Word enough in our day. The interest is in getting blessed, picking a few Scriptures to prove a certain Christian worldview, ticking some religious boxes, belonging to a group, having a 'ticket' to heaven, or having someone else do all the work and give them a list of rules or a set of instructions to follow. This is not Christianity.

Jesus desires all of us to be disciples.

Jesus commanded us to be witnesses, to make disciples, and to teach them to observe all things He has commanded (*Matthew 28:19-20)*. But how can we teach what we don't know? How can we

preach what we don't understand (*Romans 10:14-17*)? If we cannot articulate the gospel, how will we preach to others? God also expects parents to teach their children His Word. How will we teach our children what we do not know?

All Christians are expected to give a defense for their faith and a reason for what they believe. We should be able to tell others what Jesus has done and how it is good news for them. We are not called to preach about our church or pastor. As Christ's ambassadors, our work is to proclaim what Jesus has done for all humanity—that is the gospel. Everyone should be able to articulate this.

"But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give a defense to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you. But respond with gentleness and respect." 1 Peter 3:15

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." Jude 1:3

"I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings and will not be ashamed." Psalm 119:46

Knowing the Bible is a personal responsibility.

We must take responsibility for our own Christian education by obeying God's command to meditate on His Word, day and night (*Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2)*. Not knowing the Word is direct disobedience to God's command in the Scriptures.

We cannot have a relationship with Jesus if we do not know Him through the Scriptures, because they reveal Him. Otherwise, we may find ourselves inadvertently believing falsehoods and even following a false Christ. Let us remember that our Lord warned us that deception would increase in the last days. He also warned us of the rise of many false prophets who would deceive, if possible, the very elect (*Matthew 24:24)*. Knowing the Scriptures and having a relationship with the Holy Spirit is key to having a stable faith that is not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine.

"Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth." Ephesians 4:14

*"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, **a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth**." 2 Timothy 2:15*

20 Powerful Benefits of Studying the Word of God

The word of God has powerful benefits in the believer's life. God's word is not an option for the believer but a priority and necessity both for this life and that to come. We shall understand why this is as we look at some benefits of God's word found in the Bible. This list is not conclusive and only scratches the surface. As you study the word of God, you will discover more benefits.

Benefits of the Word of God

1. The Word Reveals Jesus Christ.

Jesus is described in the Bible as the Word of God. The word of God is Jesus himself. The scriptures from Genesis to Revelation reveal him, testify of him, and glorify him. By studying the Word of God, we get to know Jesus more and grow in the knowledge of God.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." John 1:1-3

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14

"27And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in ALL THE SCRIPTURES the things concerning himself…32and they said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" … 44and he said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, CONCERNING ME." 45Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Luke 24:27, 32, 44-45

"*You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me." John 5:39*

2. Helps us love and obey Jesus.

Jesus said that we prove our love for him by keeping his commandments. His commandments are found in his word. By obeying the word, we grow in our love for him. The Father loves and reveals himself to those who obey the Lord Jesus.

"If you love me, keep my commandments." John 14:15

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." John 14:21

3. Gives wisdom for salvation and eternal life.

God's word gives us wisdom for salvation, revealing how to please God and have eternal life. Without God's word, we would not be able to find the way to salvation or eternal life.

"And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:15

"But Simon Peter answered Him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." John 6:68

"But now revealed and made known through the writings of the prophets by the command of the eternal God, in order to lead all nations to the obedience that comes from faith." Romans 16:26

4. The word of God is the source of faith.

There would be no faith without God's word. It is his word that not only gives us faith but is the basis of our faith. Faith comes from hearing God's word. It is through the word of God that we get to know the promises of God, which give us confidence in him. Our faith is not built on any other foundation except God's word. The Bible also says that without faith, it's impossible to please God, which means that we cannot please God if we do not know his word.

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

5. The word of God prepares us for judgment day.

Jesus said that his words would judge us on the last day. Therefore, by knowing the word of God, we prepare ourselves for the day of judgment by knowing what God requires of us and obeying it. Rejecting or disobeying God's word means we will not make it in the judgment because it is the word that will judge us and nothing else.

"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." John 12:48

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life." John 5:24

6. The word of God is food for the believer.

The apostle Paul compares the word of God to milk, which a newborn baby needs to grow (*1 Peter 2:2*), and solid food for the mature (*Hebrews 5:12*). Therefore, cultivating a daily habit of feeding on God's word results in steadier spiritual growth. Without a steady diet of God's word, the believer will not grow from a newborn baby to a mature believer and will become spiritually malnourished, remain immature, and be unable to resist the enemy and produce fruit.

"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food." Hebrews 5:12

"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." 1 Peter 2:2

7. The word provides spiritual instruction.

The word of God is the chief source of instruction for the believer. It is through it that we receive doctrine (teaching), conviction, correction, comfort, and edification. It equips us for good works and righteousness and makes us perfect as believers.

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof (conviction), for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished (equipped) unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." Romans 15:4

8. Spiritual strength and stability.

Being rooted in the word of God gives us stability. We become like houses built on a rock that are not shaken or destroyed when the storms, trials, and tests of life come, since we have God's promises and truths to support and anchor us. Without the word of God, it is inevitable to fall when the storms come, since it is the only sure foundation.

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock." And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." Matthew 7:24-27

9. The word of God gives wisdom and understanding.

God's word is the mind of God and is the source of true wisdom. By hearing, obeying, and meditating on God's word, we become wise. The Bible says the word of God can make us wiser than our teachers, our enemies, and the ancients (elders). Jesus is the Word, and he is the source of all wisdom.

"You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Your precepts." Psalm 119:98-100

"In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3

"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple." Psalm 19:7

10. Provides guidance and direction.

The word of God is a lamp and light that provides direction and guides our way. Jesus is the word of God, and by obeying or following it, we receive direction and walk in the light.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119:105

"For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Proverbs 6:23

"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes." Psalm 19:8

"Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." John 8:12

11. Reveals the will and mind of God.

The word of God reveals the mind and will of God. Jesus came to earth to do the will of God, and He says that the will of God is the command of God. Even he was subject to God's word and what was written about him in it. To know the will of God for us, we must study his word.

By knowing God's will and His mind, we are also able to pray effectively. When we pray according to God's will, he is sure to answer us *(1 John 5:14)*. This is how Jesus prayed *(Luke 22:42)* and how he taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer *(Matthew 6:10)*.

"Then I said, 'Behold, I have come—in the volume of the book it is written of Me—to do Your will, O God.'" Hebrews 10:7

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." John 6:38

"For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak." John 12:49

"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11

12. Source of all truth.

God's word is the source of all truth. Jesus is the truth. God is truth, and the things he has spoken are truth. Anything that contradicts God's word is a lie. We get to know the truth by studying God's word. Jesus also said that the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, would guide us into all truth and bring his words to our remembrance since they are the source of truth.

"But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." John 14:26

"However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." John 16:13

"These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." Acts 17:11

"The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever." Psalm 119:160

13. Source of healing and deliverance.

The word of God heals, delivers, and saves. Jesus spoke and healed the sick, cast out demons, and set captives free. The word of God spoken with faith can do the same for us and through us.

"He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions." Psalm 107:20

"When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick." Matthew 8:16

"The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed." Matthew 8:8

14. The word of God gives us the fear of God.

We learn the fear of God by getting to know him, his ways, his nature, and his past dealings with humanity through his word.

"*Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes." Deuteronomy 17:18-19*

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever." Psalm 111:10

15. Keeps us from sinning.

The word of God keeps us from sinning against God. It reveals what sin is and what pleases God, and also gives us the power to overcome sin.

"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." Psalm 119:11

"The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide." Psalm 37:31

16. A weapon for spiritual warfare.

The Bible calls the word of God the sword of the Spirit. It is a part of the armor of God and helps us fight off the attacks of the enemy, thus providing protection. It is also described as a fire and hammer. The word of God spoken in faith and righteousness destroys the contrary works of the enemy. It is the only offensive weapon in the armor of God (*Ephesians 6:10-18).* Angels hearken to God's word to fulfill it.

"And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Ephesians 6:17

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword." Hebrews 4:12

"Bless the LORD, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word." Psalm 103:20

"Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" Jeremiah 23:29

17. Reveals who we are.

The word of God is described as a mirror. It reveals our hearts, motives, and faults and shows us who we really are so that we can repent and change.

"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." James 1:22-25,

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

18. Sanctifies and makes us holy.

The word of God makes us holy. It washes us, cleanses us, and sanctifies us, preparing us for the kingdom of God.

"That He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:26-27

"Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." John 17:17

19. Source of blessing.

Obedience to the word of God provides blessing to our lives. Disobedience brings curses.

"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near." Revelation 1:3

"But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" Luke 11:28

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you

high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God." Deuteronomy 28:1-2

"But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you." Deuteronomy 28:15

20. Helps us become prosperous.

The Bible promises us that meditating on God's word, keeping it in our hearts, and obeying it, allowing it to guide our lives, brings prosperity. This is because God's word contains the wisdom of God, which brings favor and success to those who follow it. After all, God himself is wisdom.

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Joshua 1:8

"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or set foot on the path of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the LORD, and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, yielding its fruit in season, whose leaf does not wither, and who prospers in all he does." Psalm 1:1-3

"Hear me, O Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper." 2 Chronicles 20:20

Study and Obey to Enjoy the Benefits

As I mentioned at the beginning, these are only a few of the benefits of studying the Word of God. They are inexhaustible. I pray that these will inspire you to get a Bible, cultivate a daily habit of studying the word, and obey it. It is in obedience that the blessings and benefits come.

Jesus compared the word of God to a seed. It is sown on many types of hearts, but only the seed sown on good ground produces fruit. This good ground is the good and noble heart that keeps the word of God, obeys it, and then goes on to bear fruit with patience.

"Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. Now the

ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ***But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience (perseverance****).” Luke 8:11-15*

“But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.” Matthew 13:23

How to Study the Bible – 12 Effective Ways

An essential key to spiritual growth is daily, habitual study and meditation on portions of the Bible, God's word. The apostle Paul compares the word of God to milk, which a newborn baby needs to grow (*1 Peter 2:2*). Therefore, just as a baby needs his mother's milk every day to grow, cultivating a daily habit of feeding on God's word results in steadier and more impactful growth. The word is food to us.

"As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby." 1 Peter 2:2

"Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

"Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day." Psalm 119:97

The Bible is the inspired word of God

The Holy Spirit inspired the words of the Bible. He is the real author and only used human vessels to record God's words. The word of God is the primary means through which God speaks to us. Jesus is also referred to as the Word of God. The scriptures, therefore, are Jesus himself.

The word of God is God's mind and will revealed to us. It helps us know him and his will for our lives. The word of God helps a believer grow spiritually and in holiness. It also makes us productive in our Christian walk.

"For the prophecy did not come in times past by the will of man, but the holy men of God spoke, being inspired by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1:21

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it pierces even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart." Hebrews 4:12

Below are 12 effective and useful tips from my own experience that I believe will be helpful to new converts and anyone seeking to make scripture study a daily part of their lives.

12 Effective Ways to Study the Bible

1. Study the Bible daily: Set aside a place and time

Make it a daily habit to study God's word by deliberately setting aside time each day for this purpose. This requires discipline and deliberation. The best time is in the morning as you do your morning prayers. Choose a quiet place without distractions. Feel free to set aside a time that suits you best. But make it a set-apart time so that it becomes a habit and an appointment you must keep. We should prioritize spending time with God even more than we do other things like work, grooming, exercise, and so forth. God is sure to bless us if we put him first every day.

"For bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." 1 Timothy 4:8

2. Use a physical Bible and a reliable translation

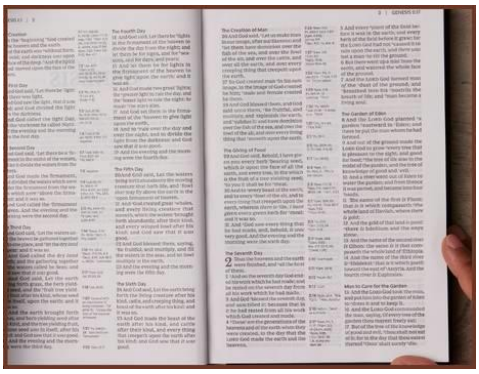
Invest in a quality physical Bible, as this allows you to have a personal Bible, which you can make notes on, underline, travel with, and become familiar with. This is more enriching than using Bible apps and online Bibles as your main Bible, which tend to promote laziness and distractions.

I recommend the King James Version (*KJV*), which is one of the oldest and most faithful translations, dating back to 1611. It is not corrupted as with many modern translations. A KJV cross-reference Bible is best, as it will have alternative word suggestions for the more archaic ones in the cross-reference section.

If the KJV English is just too hard for you to understand, you could get a New King James Version (*NKJV)*, which is not bad. But I would still recommend getting a KJV Bible eventually or concurrently, as this is the best and most faithful translation even for memorization. I use a Thomas Nelson KJV Center-Column Reference Bible I have had for 13 years now.

I recommend investing in a good cross-reference Bible, as this will enrich your study more. If you do not have a cross-reference Bible, BibleHub has good cross-references.

Picture of a center-column reference Bible below.



I also recommend getting a Bible with maps at the back. These maps include maps of Israel during Jesus' time, Paul's missionary journeys, and other Old Testament maps. These are very useful to give you a vivid picture of the places Jesus and the apostle Paul traveled to. This will greatly enrich your understanding and enjoyment of the scriptures.

A quality Bible may be expensive, but it is the greatest investment you can make in your spiritual life and is worth it. A good-quality Bible can last you many, many years.

3. Have a study plan: Study the entire Bible, book by book

It is essential to have a systematic Bible study plan to stay focused, measure progress, and maintain consistency of thought. Study book by book, starting with the New Testament if you are new to the Bible. Aim to read a certain number of chapters a day, as this will help train your discipline and concentration (e.g., a minimum of 4 chapters a day). Read systematically until you finish the entire Bible. Reading a verse here and a verse there haphazardly is not wise, and you will not grow in maturity or doctrine that way.

If you're a new believer, I recommend starting with the New Testament and studying it a few times over before you go to the Old Testament. Once you are familiar with the New Testament, the Old Testament will be more understandable and relatable.

I recommend downloading a good Bible study plan. Our flexible **One-Year Bible Reading Plans** are excellent to support you in doing this. By reading a minimum of 4 chapters a day, it is possible to finish the entire Bible in a year. Check out and download our two One-Year Bible Reading Plans **here**.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof (conviction), for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished (equipped) unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

4. Pray and ask for wisdom as you study God's word

The Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible, and he is also our Helper and Teacher (*John 16:13, John 14:16, John 14:26*). Ask Him for wisdom and understanding as you begin to study the scriptures, and He will do it. Only He can illumine our minds to understand God's word.

"But the anointing that you received from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him." 1 John 2:27

"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." James 1:5

"Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Luke 24:45

5. Meditate on and memorize the word of God

Take your time when studying the Word of God; don't rush. You are studying and not just reading. Meditate (ponder) on what you are reading. To meditate is to think upon, imagine, and ponder. Meditating is like a cow chewing cud; it is running the words over and over in your mind and heart. The word of God is living and active. It is therefore crucial to meditate upon it rather than just read through it like a novel. As you grow in the Word, you can also aim to memorize verses that stand out.

"This Book of the Law must not depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in all you do." Joshua 1:8

Memorize scriptures.

As you read the word aloud, memorize verses that stand out. Memorizing the word of God will prove helpful in times of temptation and trial. The word of God is a sword (*Ephesians 6:17*). It is through the word of God that we can counter Satan's attacks. Jesus did this in the wilderness when he was tempted by the devil because he had memorized the word of God. He spoke scriptures against the devil and defeated him. Memorizing the promises of God also encourages and builds up our faith.

"Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:4

The word of God admonishes us to meditate on God's word day and night. The only way to do this is if we have memorized passages of scripture. It is then we can regurgitate them in our mind.

"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." Psalm 1:1-2

6. Read the Bible out loud

Another powerful way to study the scriptures is to read them out loud. This is how I study my Bible. This is how God taught the Israelites to meditate on his word. The word "meditate" in the Bible also means "to mutter." To mutter is to say something in a low voice. Therefore, you don't have to be loud, but audible to yourself. Hearing the word as you read it from your own mouth, as well as reading, doubles the impact.

"*The ancient art of reading aloud has a number of benefits for adults, from helping improve our memories and understand complex texts… Colin MacLeod, a psychologist at the University of Waterloo in Canada, has extensively researched the impact of reading aloud on memory. He and his collaborators have shown that people consistently remember words and texts better if they read them aloud than if they read them silently*." Sophie Hardach, BBC

*"Blessed is the one who **reads aloud** the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear and obey what is written in it, because the time is near." Revelation 1:3*

"But He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." Luke 11:28

7. Take the Bible literally and with childlike faith

When studying the Bible, take it literally. This means taking the passage to mean exactly what it says without looking for hidden meanings. The Bible is not a cryptic text; it was written for all people, including children, and so God has made it plain and easy to understand. It is not a book for scholars but for God's children. Therefore, do not approach it with the idea that it is difficult to understand, but with the expectation that God will speak to you through it, through the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that the kingdom of God is for those who are like little children and for the poor in spirit. He desires to speak to you through his word, and he will if you give him the time.

"At that time Jesus declared, 'I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.'" Luke 11:28

8. Understand the context of the passages

It is also important when studying the Bible to understand the context of the passage and what is being talked about. This is why it is important to study the Bible book by book, so that you do not take verses out of context and come up with erroneous doctrines. False doctrines are often formed by taking scriptures out of context to make them mean what they do not mean. Studying chapter by chapter and book by book will ensure that you become a wise Bible student who understands what God is conveying.

Likewise, scriptures interpret scripture. God never contradicts himself. Therefore, if a particular passage does not make sense, as you continue to study more passages, they will shed light on what was difficult to understand. That is an important thing to know in studying the word of God: there are no contradictions, and the word clarifies itself. Since God inspired His Word, it is error-free.

"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture comes from one's own interpretation. For no such prophecy was ever brought forth by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." 2 Peter 1*:20-21*

9. Stick to the Bible

During your Bible study time, stick to reading **only** the Bible. Devotionals by your favorite preacher or commentaries are not the Bible. Study the actual Bible as a priority over any devotional, since this is the pure word of God. Devotionals are excellent, but do any additional readings after you have finished your daily Bible study readings.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16

10. Using Bible study tools

If you come across words or phrases you don't understand, always look them up in a Bible dictionary and concordance, considering the original Greek and Hebrew meanings and other

alternative Bible translations for the same word or passage. BibleHub is a good site for this; it also has good cross-references.

Avoid commentaries if you haven't been studying the Bible for a long time. Aim to study the Bible for a while by yourself before you read commentaries. Allow the Holy Spirit to teach you the scriptures rather than rushing to read other people's interpretations. For this reason, I'd not recommend using a Bible with a commentary if you're still new to studying the Word.

Once you have been studying the Bible for a while, commentaries can help supplement your Bible reading, but be careful which commentaries you read. Albert Barnes's and the Reverend Matthew Henry's commentaries are highly recommended and respected by great ministers of the gospel and Christians over the centuries for their wisdom, fidelity to scripture, and insights.

11. Keep Christ as the focus of your Bible study

The entire Bible is about Jesus Christ. Keep Christ as your focus and the main character of the Bible, and not yourself.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14

The scriptures point to Jesus and reveal him. They are not motivational or man-centered words, but they are Jesus himself. All the scriptures point to him and reveal him. When we make the scriptures about us, they lose the power to transform. Seek to see Jesus in the scriptures, and the word will become flesh and life in you. As you focus on Jesus, your own life will be transformed because it is he who transforms us. The Bible is not an ordinary book.

"27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in ALL THE SCRIPTURES the things concerning himself… 32 And they said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?" … 44 And he said unto them, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, CONCERNING ME." 45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures." Luke 24:27, 44-45

"*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." John 5:39*

12. Study the Bible to obey

Study the word of God to obey. God has given us his word for us to obey, and this obedience involves action. If we read but do not obey, it profits us nothing. Jesus said that those who obey his word are wise. By studying the word and obeying it, we strengthen our foundation, and we become stronger Christians who bear fruit and can weather the storms of life. If we do not obey, we deceive ourselves. Therefore, as you study, purpose that you will obey what you read and ask for strength and wisdom to obey when it seems difficult.

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only. Otherwise, you are deceiving yourselves." James 1:22

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because its foundation was on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the torrents raged, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its collapse!" Matthew 7:24-27

"*If you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." John 13:17*

Grow and teach others

I pray that these 12 tips will inspire you to study the word of God every day of your life. Remember, growth is deliberate. If we make Bible study a regular habit, we will reap the rewards. We will become mature disciples of Jesus Christ who can disciple and teach others. This is what Jesus desires and requires of us: not to remain babies, but to grow and then help others grow!

"But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, a*nd that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." 2 Timothy 3:14-15*

"And the things that you have heard me say among many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be qualified to teach others as well." 2 Timothy 2:2

How to Pray: 12 Lessons from the Lord's Prayer

What better person to learn how to pray from than the Lord Jesus himself, the great intercessor? Jesus' earthly life was one of prayer. And even now at the right hand of the Father, Jesus is still praying and making intercession for us.

"Therefore, He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them." Hebrews 7:25

In this article, we are going to glean 12 lessons from the Lord's comprehensive teaching on prayer found in *Matthew 6:5-15,* which includes the famous Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer on two occasions recorded in *Matthew 6:9-13* and *Luke 11:2-4*. Jesus gave us the perfect model of prayer in the Lord's Prayer that all of us can use to enrich our prayer lives.

Lord, teach us to pray.

On one occasion, as Jesus was praying, one of his disciples, watching Jesus pray, said to him afterwards, *"Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Luke 11:1.*

"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." Luke 11:1

Jesus proceeded to teach his disciples what has become the great model and teaching on prayer: the Lord's Prayer. Jesus taught the same prayer in his detailed teaching on prayer in Matthew's gospel, part of the great Sermon on the Mount. It is from this entire teaching on prayer that we are going to pick out 12 key lessons on prayer.

The Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:5-15

"5*And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. 7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 "Therefore, do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*

9 ***In this manner, therefore, pray****: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us this day our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. 13 And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. 14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*"

Below are 12 lessons from Jesus' teaching on prayer:

1. When you pray. (vs. 5)

"And when you pray." Matthew 6:5

The first thing Jesus says when he begins the teaching on prayer is, "*And when you pray*." This means that he expects us to pray. Prayer is simply communion with God. Every believer should cultivate a daily habit of prayer just as Jesus did. We cannot have a relationship with God the Father, Son, and Spirit without prayer. Jesus made it easy for us and not only taught us how to pray but also modeled it in his own life.

Jesus' example and life of prayer.

As we read the four books of the gospel (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John*), we see many accounts of Jesus going off alone to pray. Even though he was God and sinless, Jesus still prayed. We find Jesus, despite his busy ministry, deliberately setting aside times to pray. He prayed at various times: mornings before dawn, evenings, and also spent nights in prayer. He prayed in the mountains, in the wilderness, and also while with his disciples. Here are a few instances:

"And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there." Matthew 14:23

"And when He had sent them away, He departed to the mountain to pray." Mark 6:46

"So He Himself often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed." Luke 5:16

"Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." Luke 6:12

"During the days of Jesus' earthly life, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence." Hebrews 5:7

If Jesus prayed, how much more should we? Because prayer is commanded, to not pray is sin.

2. Do not pray like hypocrites. (vs. 5)

"And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward." Matthew 6:5

The first thing Jesus teaches on is **motive** and **attitude** in prayer. He warns us not to be like the hypocrites who pray to be seen by men. The Pharisees stood in public places and made great exhibitions of prayer to receive praise from men. However, their hearts were far from God, and they had no relationship with him. Such attitudes and motives have no reward from God. Prayer is communion with God and not a show for men.

"These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." Matthew 15:8

3. Go into your room and shut your door. (vs. 6).

"But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." Matthew 6:6

Jesus then emphasized praying to God in **private/secret** and having a **place of prayer**. He said, "*Go to your room and shut your door."* This implies a personal and private place where one can meet God daily.

He did not say, "*Go to church or temple*," but "*Go to your room*." By using these words, Jesus showed us that prayer is a personal matter. "*Pray to your Father who is in the secret place*." Your "*room"* may be a bedroom, a garden, or a mountain, but it should be your private place to meet with God. Jesus mainly prayed in the mountains because he did not have privacy where he lived, as he stayed at people's houses and was often surrounded by large crowds.

"Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed." Mark 1:35

The place itself is not the concern, but the privacy, sincerity, and taking time alone to cultivate a relationship with God are. Jesus promises a reward for this kind of prayer.

4. Do not use vain repetitions when you pray. (vs. 7-8)

"*And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. "Therefore, do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.*" Matthew 6:7-8

Jesus warned against **vain repetitions** in prayer, which means babbling or empty, meaningless repetition of words. God is a father and desires genuine, sincere, and honest communication with us, and not just meaningless or rote repetition of words. The Pharisees loved to pray, repeating many words that they did not mean, just to appear spiritual to people. Jesus said that is how the heathen pray, but those who have a relationship with God should not pray as such. God already knows what we need, and so we don't have to go round in circles using empty words to express our hearts to him.

5. Our Father in heaven. (vs. 9)

"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven." Matthew 6:9

Jesus says we should pray, saying, "*Our Father in heaven*." God is our Father. This is personal but also plural. He is ***our father***. God is the father of a family. It is good to be conscious of the fact that we are members of a family. This awareness expands our prayers so that we are not just individualistic in relating with God but include others in love in our prayers.

God is a person and not just some ethereal force in the sky. Through the Lord Jesus and what he did on the cross for us, God is not only our creator but has also become our ***Father***. We can therefore approach him with confidence, knowing that he loves us and we are intimately connected to him.

Before salvation, God was not our father but just a creator, and we were at enmity with God. But now, he is our Father, and we have peace with him and confidence to approach him. Unlike earthly fathers, he is a perfect father.

"You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:26

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:15

"And your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." Matthew 6:6

6. Hallowed be your name. (vs. 9)

"Hallowed be Your name." Matthew 6:9

In prayer, we start with worshiping and exulting God. We praise and magnify his holy name and declare to him his attributes, magnificence, and nature in our adoration. We can do this through song, psalms, and adoration. As we study God's word, we learn more and more of his attributes, and we use these to worship and adore him. God loves to be worshiped and honored. He dwells in the praises of his people.

God is holy, awesome, mighty, the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, Yahweh, the creator, the one who was and is and is to come, I AM that I AM, the immortal one, the all-sufficient one, the self-existing one, the father of our Lord Jesus, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the covenant-keeping God, the terrible God, God above all gods, without descent or generation, the eternal one. As we worship God, we stand in awe of Him and prepare our hearts to come into His presence. He is a great king.

"For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods." Psalm 95:3

"*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name." Psalm 100:4*

"Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Exodus 15:11

"Yet You are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel." Psalm 22:3

7. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. (vs. 10)

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10

First, we ask for God's kingdom to come and for his will to be done. These two are intricately connected. God's kingdom comes as his will is done. A kingdom is a realm governed by a king. God's kingdom is his reign and dominion, his rule and authority. Jesus himself modeled this in his own life of prayer. He always sought God's will and God's glory. The night he was arrested to be killed, in his darkest moment, Jesus prayed not for his deliverance or comfort, but for God's will to be done. We should be like-minded.

God's will is God's mind, desires, and commands as expressed in His Word, the Bible. By praying for God's will to be done, we are asking that God's reign and dominion prevail on earth as they do in heaven. There are a few specific things we can pray for in this regard:

Pray for the salvation of souls.

As the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, God's kingdom advances. The gospel is also called the gospel of the kingdom. The only way God's kingdom comes is by people becoming part of his kingdom. And this is only possible through Jesus Christ and the salvation he offers. It is God's will for all to be saved.

"Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John 3:3

Therefore, in praying for God's kingdom to come, we should pray for the lost to hear the gospel, pray for God to send laborers to his harvest, pray for our unsaved loved ones, pray for missionaries and preachers, and pray for any specific nations and people groups that God places on our hearts.

"Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Matthew 9:37-38

"The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise as some understand slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish but everyone to come to repentance." 2 Peter 3:9

Pray for kings and all in authority.

We should also pray for rulers and authorities to be obedient to God, know God, and put in place policies that are friendly to the spread of the gospel. Those in authority have great influence over the people they rule. The apostle Paul exhorts us to pray for them that we may live quiet and peaceful lives. Peaceful nations are beneficial for the preaching of the gospel.

*"Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, **who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." 1 Timothy 2:1-5*

Pray for the Church and believers to obey God's will.

God's kingdom also comes as we believers obey God and His Word and shine our light in the world. God's will is done as we obey him. Therefore, we can also at this point pray for the body

of Christ, our churches, church workers, pastors, preachers of the gospel, and for ourselves and fellow believers to be obedient to God. God's will is revealed in the Bible. All our prayers should be aligned with God's will because God cannot violate his word. Be as specific and personal as possible in your prayers, mentioning by name those you can, guided by the Holy Spirit.

"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Romans 14:17

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you." Matthew 6:33

8. Give us our daily bread. (vs. 11)

"Give us this day our daily bread." Matthew 6:11

After praying for God's kingdom and his desires, we can now make our requests. Jesus teaches us to ask God for our daily bread. Bread here refers to our needs. These needs can be emotional, physical, financial, spiritual, family-related, health-related, educational, and so forth. Anything that concerns us daily is a need we should bring to God in prayer.

Notice Jesus says, "***Give us***." The plural means we don't just ask for ourselves. We ask for others, too. Do you know someone with a need? Pray for them too. This is called **intercession**.

We are to present all our requests to God with a sincere heart, expectation, and confidence that he is a good father.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" Matthew 7:7-11

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

God cares about us, and Jesus earlier in verse 8 says God knows what we need even before we ask. "*For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him*." But he desires us to ask him since he is our Father. Let us therefore ask with confidence.

Our requests should be according to God's will.

Jesus sets the tone in verse 10 by teaching us that prayer should be according to God's will. Therefore, all our requests should be per God's will. God does not answer prayers that violate his nature or his word. It therefore improves our prayer lives greatly if we are also students of God's word. God's promises and his will are clear in Scripture. Once we know his will on any matter, it gives us confidence when we come to pray to him.

God honors his word and promises. When we remind him of his promises in his word by faith, he delights to answer. Our faith also grows as we become familiar with God's word, and faith is a key to answered prayer.

*"And this is the confidence that we have before Him**: if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us**. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we already possess what we have asked of Him." 1 John 5:14-15*

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Romans 10:17

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is (exists), and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

9. Forgive us as we forgive others. (vs. 12)

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Matthew 6:12

Every time we pray, we should ask God to forgive us our debts. The word "debt" here refers to ***obligations, moral faults, transgressions, or something owed***. We sin against God every day; sin is the debt owed.

The apostle John tells us in *1 John 1:8-10* that if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and lie and make God a liar. We sin in many ways, many of them unconscious, and many of our sins are sins of omission. Because we are not aware of many of our sins, we must always ask for forgiveness even when we can't immediately think of anything. God tells us to do so and promises to forgive us. We should confess any known and unknown sins and ask for God to forgive us and for the blood of Jesus to wash us.

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and

to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." 1 John 1:7-10

"If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Psalm 66:18

We must forgive others before we pray.

The condition in *Matthew 6:12* is that God forgives us only as we forgive others. If we refuse to forgive others, God will not forgive us. If we are not forgiven, we remain under condemnation and are deemed transgressors. As a result, God will not hear our prayers. In *Mark 11:25*, Jesus is even more explicit, linking prayer to forgiveness.

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses." Mark 11:25

10. Lead us not into temptation. Deliver us from the evil one. (vs. 13)

"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." Matthew 6:13

In prayer, Jesus tells us to ask God not to lead us into temptation. This means, in essence, "*and do not allow us to enter into*." It does not mean God is leading us to temptation himself, since God does not tempt with evil *(James 1:13).* The word "temptation" here means *trials, testing, solicitations*, or *adversities*. God is all-powerful. He can lead us away from situations where we may be tempted and tried. These are sent our way either by our own lusts or by the evil one. These may be temptations to sin or trials of difficulties.

Sometimes God may allow us to be tempted to test our faith, but never beyond what we can bear. And the Bible encourages us that he will always provide a way of escape. And so, when we pray for God not to lead us into temptation, he will either protect us from situations of temptation, provide moral and spiritual strength, or make ways of escape for us.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

"Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." James 1:13-15

Pray for deliverance from evil.

We should also pray for God to deliver us from the evil one (the devil). Some translations say, "*Deliver us from evil*." Sometimes believers come under attacks of various kinds orchestrated by the devil. This is inevitable since we are still in the world. We should, in such cases, ask God to deliver us from the evil one.

And even when we are not presently under attack, we should preempt and pray that God would protect us each day and deliver us from Satan's plans and attacks. God sees and knows all things and can direct our steps accordingly. Jesus, too, prayed for us before he left the earth, that God would keep us from the evil one. God promises to preserve us, and so we should ask for his deliverance.

"I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one." John 17:15

"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen." Romans 16:20

"But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one." 2 Thessalonians 3:3

"The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment." 2 Peter 2:9

11. Yours is the kingdom, power, and glory forever. (vs. 13)

"For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." Matthew 6:13

The Lord's Prayer ends here with this expression of praise. In the oldest and most reliable manuscripts of Matthew, this verse was absent and was a later addition. This means that Jesus did not include this in the prayer. However, it is a good expression to end the prayer to reflect on the fact that the kingdom, power, and glory belong to God forever!

Since all things, people, and all power belong to God, we can have confidence that he will answer us. This expression, "*For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever*," is known as a doxology. A doxology is an expression of adoration and glory to God. We end prayer in thanksgiving and praise to God that he has heard us.

"**Amen**" ends the prayer. "Amen" means "verily," "truly," or "so be it." It is an affirmation or agreement that God has heard us and granted our request.

12. The necessity of forgiveness. (vs. 14-15)

"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:14-15

Jesus ends the teaching on prayer with an emphasis on the necessity of forgiveness. Although he mentioned this in the prayer itself, he mentions it again in conclusion. This should show us the great importance of forgiving others and also the grave danger of not forgiving. God takes this matter seriously, and he says he will not forgive us if we refuse to forgive others.

By emphasizing this after his teaching on prayer, Jesus is emphasizing the fact that our praying is meaningless if we have unforgiveness in our hearts. Additionally, our souls are in danger of damnation if we do not forgive others because it means we too remain unforgiven and therefore under God's condemnation and judgment.

Make haste to forgive.

In an earlier teaching in *Matthew 5*, Jesus emphasizes the need to reconcile with others before bringing our gifts to God. Before we pray, let us therefore make haste to forgive and be reconciled to others. And if we find it difficult, we can pray for the grace to forgive. This is a prayer God will answer willingly because it is his will that we forgive!

"Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny." Matthew 5:23-26

Go and pray!

I hope this article has encouraged you and motivated you to pray. If you are a new believer or new to prayer, do not be intimidated. Jesus' teaching on prayer was for ordinary men like you and me. Everyone can pray, because everyone has access to the Father. Make a beginning today.

"The prayer of a righteous man has great power to prevail. ***Elijah was a man just like us****. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth yielded its crops." James 5:16-18*

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

14 Conditions of Answered Prayer

Not all prayers are equal, and not all prayers are answered by God. There are conditions and requirements for answered prayer given in the word of God.

Prayer is simply communication with God. In the Bible, prayer encompasses adoration, confession, thanksgiving, intercession, petition, and surrender. All these are forms of prayer.

In an earlier article we looked at 12 lessons from Jesus' teaching on prayer, famously called the Lord's Prayer. In this article we will look at the conditions for answered prayer to ensure we are not praying amiss and receive what we request of God.

The Conditions for Answered Prayer

1. Actually pray: Ask

The first key to answered prayer is to actually pray and ask. God has designed that he responds to us through prayer. If we don't pray or ask, we should not expect to receive. God respects our free will. If we do not ask him for help, he will not assume that we need it. Asking is an act of faith and also humility.

God cares about us. In *Matthew 6:8,* Jesus says God knows what we need even before we ask. "*For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him*." But he desires us to ask him since he is our Father. Let us therefore ask with confidence.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" Matthew 7:7-11

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

2. Pray in the name of Jesus.

Jesus taught us to pray in his name. To pray in Jesus' name is not a formula or just saying, *"In Jesus' name I pray"* rotely. It means praying in his **authority** and in his **nature**. When you do

anything in someone's name, you are representing that person. The prayer, therefore, should not be against the Lord's commandments or his divine nature. Additionally, we can only pray in his name if we are in a relationship with him. And so, to have answered prayer, we need to be born again and be in relationship with God the Father through Jesus. It is only in this way that we have authority to pray in his name. Jesus' name cannot be used by sinners.

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." John 14:13-14

"*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." John 15:16*

"In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God." John 16:26-27

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Colossians 3:17

3. Repent of sin.

God hates sin. The Bible says that our sins separate us from God so that he cannot hear us. God does not hear the prayers of sinners except prayers of repentance. The wicked are detestable to God. And so if we live in sin and refuse to repent, God cannot and will not hear us since he is a holy God and those who are not clean cannot approach him. It is therefore important to always search our hearts and repent of known and unknown sin, asking the blood of Jesus to wash us. It's also why salvation is key to answered prayer. If one is not saved, they are in sin, and God cannot hear them.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor His ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear." Isaiah 59:2 (also see *Micah 3:4*)

"If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." Psalm 66:18

"The LORD is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous." Proverbs 15:29

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." 1 John 1:8-10

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Matthew 6:12

4. Pray in faith.

God honors faith. Faith implies confidence and trust in God. We are to present all our requests to God with a sincere heart, expectation, and confidence that he is a good father and will answer us.

If we pray but do not believe that God can or will answer, he will not answer since we don't trust him. The Bible says that it is impossible to please God without faith. It dishonors God when we don't believe what he has spoken, because then we liken him to idols, which cannot hear or speak. Our confidence and faith in God receive; faith pleases him.

Faith comes from hearing the word of God. The more of God's word we know, the more our faith grows because we know what God has promised. We can then pray in confidence and be assured of answered prayer.

"And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive." Matthew 21:22 (see also Mark 11:24)

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

"Now if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask from God, the One giving generously to all and not finding fault, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, doubting nothing, for the one doubting is like a wave of the sea, being blown and being tossed by the wind. For let that man not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." James 1:5-8

Sometimes fasting is needed.

Although fasting is not necessarily a condition for answered prayer in every situation, Jesus connects it to faith. He explained to the disciples that sometimes prayer and fasting was needed to increase faith for certain situations, such as casting out strong demons.

"Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" So Jesus said to them, "Because of your unbelief; for assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard

seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. However, this kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting." Matthew 17:19-21

5. Pray according to God's will.

Answered prayer also depends on our prayers being according to God's will. Our prayers must not contradict God's nature or what he has already spoken in his word. It is therefore important to study God's word to get to know him, his nature, his mind, and his will so that we do not pray amiss. It is dangerous to be ignorant of God's word as believers.

Jesus taught us to pray for God's kingdom to come and his will to be done, and it is how he himself prayed. The night he was arrested to be killed, in his darkest moment, Jesus prayed not for his deliverance or comfort, but for God's will to be done.

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:10

*"And this is the confidence that we have before Him: **if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us**. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we already possess what we have asked of Him." 1 John 5:14-15*

"And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." Luke 22:41-42

"Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God." 1 John 3:21

"Because of this, do not be foolish, but understand what is the Lord's will." Ephesians 5:17

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." Matthew 6:33

6. Seek God's glory.

A few days before Jesus' death, troubled by his upcoming betrayal and crucifixion, Jesus did not pray for his salvation but for God to glorify his name. We should be like-minded. Our prayers should be for God's glory. In the teaching on the Lord's Prayer, Jesus begins by asking us to pray, "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matthew* 6:9). Praying this way glorifies God, reminding us that God's glory comes first. Do our prayer requests result in God's glory? Everything we do, including prayer, should be done to the glory of God.

"Now My soul has been troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But on account of this I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name." Therefore, a voice came from heaven: "I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again." John 12:27-28

*"**In this manner, therefore, pray**: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Matthew 6:9-10*

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it." John 14:13-14

"Therefore, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all things to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31

"Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart." Psalm 37:4

7. Ask with the right motives.

Another key to answered prayer is to pray with the right motives. Selfish and carnal prayers are not answered by God. This is closely related to praying according to God's will and for God's glory.

"You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures." James 4:3

8. Forgive

In the Lord's teachings on prayer, he mentioned that we must forgive others if we wish to be forgiven. God forgives us only as we forgive others. If we refuse to forgive others, God will not forgive us. If we are not forgiven, we remain under condemnation, and God will not hear our prayers. Every time we pray, we should ask God to forgive us our sins but also make sure we too forgive those who have offended us. This is an important key to answered prayer that many overlook: unforgiveness hinders our prayers.

"And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses." Mark 11:25

"Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on

the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny." Matthew 5:23-26

9. Abide in the Lord and his word.

Jesus says that if we abide or remain in him and his words abide in us, then we will ask what we desire and it will be given to us. Obedience to the Lord Jesus and his word is a key to answered prayer. When we obey him and remain in him, his desires become ours, and we seek to please him, and as a result even our prayers will please him, yielding answers.

"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you." John 15:7

"*One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination." Proverbs 28:9*

"For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the LORD is against those who do evil." 1 Peter 3:12

10. Pray fervently.

Another key to answered prayer is fervent prayer. The Bible tells us that Elijah prayed fervently for it not to rain, and it did not rain for 3 years. Jesus likewise prayed fervently during his earthly life. Fervent prayer implies energetic and powerful prayer backed by feeling. This is opposed to cold, lifeless prayer. God desires to see that we mean what we are praying with our whole heart. Usually in such prayer the body will respond physically, sometimes with sweats, shouts, tears, shaking, and so forth. Jesus prayed with loud cries and tears to God.

"Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The ***effective, fervent prayer*** *of a righteous man avails much.* Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months*." James 5:16-17*

"During the days of Jesus' earthly life, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save Him from death, and He was heard because of His reverence." Hebrews 5:7

11. Persistence/Perseverance

God does not always answer our prayers in our timing. Sometimes it can seem as if he is delaying, and this is when we need persistence in our prayers. We are to keep asking and keep knocking and keep seeking until God hears us, if we know we have met the other conditions for prayer. We mustn't give up.

In the Book of *Daniel, chapter 10*, we learn that sometimes demonic forces can hinder and delay answers to prayer, and this is more reason why we should keep praying. God is not tired by our asking; Jesus actually taught about the importance of persistence in prayer in the Parable of the Persistent Widow *(Luke 18:1-8)* and the Parable of the Persistent Friend (*Luke 11:5-10*). Persistence pays.

"Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, "Though I do not fear God nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me." Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:1-8 (see also Luke 11:5-10, the Parable of the Persistent Friend)

"Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition. To this end, stay alert with all perseverance in your prayers for all the saints." Ephesians 6:18

12. Pray with thanksgiving.

Our prayers should be with an attitude of thanksgiving and praise to God. This shows that we trust God and believe he will answer us perfectly in his divine timing and according to his will. A grateful heart is pleasing to God and attracts more of his favor. Gratitude also eases worry and anxiety. It is impossible to worry and be grateful at the same time. Hope in God abounds in thanksgiving. When we present our requests with thanksgiving, God's peace guards our hearts and minds in our waiting.

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

"In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." 1 Thessalonians 5:18

"Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," Ephesians 5:20

13. Patient waiting in hope (expectation).

Patient waiting is key to answered prayer. If the farmer digs up his seed before the plant grows, he will get no harvest. Many people give up before God answers and, as a result, receive nothing. Waiting is often hard, but if we trust that God has our best interests at heart, then we will wait patiently for his response to our prayers. Our waiting is not vain, but we wait in hope. The Bible tells us that hope does not disappoint. Waiting also builds our character and teaches us to trust God and build confidence in him. God's timing is perfect.

"Wait on the LORD; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the LORD!" Psalm 27:14

"Therefore, be patient, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer awaits the precious fruit of the earth, being patient for it until it receives the early and latter rains." James 5:7

"But if we hope for what we do not see, we await in patience." Romans 8:25

"Not only that, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance (patience); perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us." Romans 5:3-5

14. Be led by the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is our helper, comforter, and advocate. We should rely on him in our prayers, listening to his leading, conviction, and guidance, always asking him to help us. He knows our weaknesses and the mind of God. He will always guide our prayers if we rely on him. He also intercedes for us according to the will of God. We cannot make it without the Holy Spirit. He will show us where we fall short of the conditions for answered prayer and help us to please God.

"Pray in the Spirit at all times, with every kind of prayer and petition." Ephesians 6:18

"*Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*" *Romans 8:26*

"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." John 14:16-18 (also John 14:26, John 16:13)

"For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the things of the man, except the spirit of the man within him? So also, no one knows the things of God, except the Spirit of God. Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit from God, that we may know the things having been granted to us by God." 1 Corinthians 2:10-12

8 Qualities for Spiritual Growth and Fruitfulness (2 Peter 1:5-11)

The apostle Peter mentions 8 qualities he says will keep us from being barren and unfruitful in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ—if we possess them and continue to grow in them (*2 Peter 1:5-11*). Further, he says that if we diligently practice these qualities, we will never stumble in our walk with God. And to crown it all, we will receive a rich entrance into our Lord's eternal kingdom.

*"5For this very reason, make every effort (give all diligence) to add to your **faith virtue**; and to virtue, **knowledge**; 6and to knowledge, **self-control**; and to self-control, **perseverance**; and to perseverance, **godliness**; 7and to godliness, **brotherly kindness**; and to brotherly kindness, **love**. 8For if you possess these qualities and continue to grow in them, they will **keep you from being ineffective (**barren) and **unproductive** (unfruitful) in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9But whoever lacks these traits is nearsighted to the point of blindness, having forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. 10Therefore, brothers, **strive** (be diligent; make every effort) to make your calling and election sure. For if you **practice** (do) **these things you will never stumble**, 11and you will receive a **lavish reception** (rich entrance) into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." — 2 Peter 1:5–11*

These are exceedingly great promises, and it is important for us to really consider and meditate on these qualities, making every effort not only to possess them but also to grow in them.

The 8 Qualities:

1. Faith

Faith is belief, trust, assurance, and confidence in God. It is being sure that God is who he says he is, trusting every word he speaks in his word, and living by it (obedience).

*"Now **faith** is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Hebrews 11:1*

2. Virtue

Virtue is moral excellence and moral goodness. This means cultivating godly virtues as revealed in God's word and living by them.

*"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any **virtue** and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." Philippians 4:8*

3. Knowledge

This is knowledge that comes from knowing the Lord Jesus. In Jesus are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. We grow in knowledge primarily by studying God's word, which reveals his nature, mind, and will to us.

"So that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:2-3

*"But grow in the grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3:18*

4. Self-control

Self-control means having restraint and self-mastery. This is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It means being led by the Spirit rather than our carnal nature (flesh).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." Galatians 5:22-24

5. Perseverance

Perseverance can also be referred to as endurance, patience, and steadfastness. The Christian walk has trials and tribulations, but we are called to endure to the end so that we may keep the faith and receive our eternal reward.

*"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops **perseverance**. Allow perseverance to finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." James 1:2-4*

*"You need to **persevere**, so that after you have done the will of God, you will receive what He has promised." Hebrews 10:36*

6. Godliness

"Godliness" refers to piety, devotion, reverence for God, and holiness. It is the cultivation of a godly life and character. We are called as believers to be conformed to the image of Christ. And this is cultivated through obedience and being led by the Holy Spirit in all things.

*"For bodily exercise profits a little, but **godliness** is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." 1 Timothy 4:8*

*"But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, **godliness**, faith, love, patience, gentleness." 1 Timothy 6:11*

7. Brotherly kindness

This is a special love for fellow believers: love for the brethren. Christians are supposed to show love to one another since we belong to the same family. We are members of one another and members of the body of Christ.

*"Let **brotherly love** continue." Hebrews 13:1*

*"Be devoted to one another in **brotherly love**. Outdo yourselves in honoring one another." Romans 12:10*

8. Love

This is agape love, which means affection, goodwill, or benevolence. It is used in the Bible to refer to our love for God and also for one another. It also refers to the love God has for us.

"And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Mark 12:30

*"By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you **love** one another." John 13:35*

*"Love does no wrong to its neighbor. Therefore, **love** is the fulfillment of the law." Romans 13:10*

*"As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My **love**." John 15:9*

A Warning to Those Who Lack These Qualities

"But whoever lacks these traits is nearsighted (shortsighted) to the point of blindness, having forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins." 2 Peter 1:9

The warning to those who lack these qualities is that they are nearsighted. They do not have an eternal vision for their walk with God and are blind. They have forgotten that they were cleansed from their sin. These are people who have forgotten that they were saved and are living like the world. This is a dangerous state, as it means the promises given to those who possess these qualities do not apply to them. Let us take heed!

The Benefits of These Qualities in Our Spiritual Walk

"Therefore, brothers, ***strive*** *(be diligent; make every effort) to make your calling and election sure." 2 Peter 1:10*

Peter encourages us to **strive** (*be diligent; make every effort*) to make our calling and election sure. And that if we **possess** these qualities (*faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness,* and *love*) and **continue to grow** in them, we will reap the following benefits:

1. We will be useful and fruitful

"For if you possess these qualities and continue to grow in them, they will ***keep you from being ineffective (****barren, idle****) and unproductive (****unfruitful****)*** *in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:8*

Faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love will keep us from being barren and unfruitful. We will bear fruit in our spiritual life and for the kingdom of God.

2. We will never stumble

"Therefore, brothers, ***strive*** *(be diligent; make every effort) to make your calling and election sure. For if you* ***practice*** *(do)* ***these things, you will never stumble****." 2 Peter 1:10*

Faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love will keep us from falling and help us to stand firm in our walk with God. This is because they will produce maturity in us.

3. We will receive a lavish reception into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

"…and you will receive a ***lavish reception*** *(rich entrance) into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 1:11*

And at last, most importantly, Peter says that if we possess faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, and continue to grow in them, bearing fruit, we will receive a rich entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

May the Lord help us to cultivate and grow these qualities in our lives and be diligent to make our calling and election sure.

"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God." Colossians 1:9-10

Who is the Bride of Christ? 7 Characteristics

The Bible describes Jesus as the **bridegroom**, and the Church as his **bride**. But is every *professing* Christian the Bride of Christ?

*"**He that hath the bride is the bridegroom**" Prophet John referring to Jesus in John 3:29*

God is also referred to severally in the Old Testament as the husband of his chosen people:

"For as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Isaiah 62:5

"For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called." Isaiah 54:5

"So I will betroth you (take you to be my wife) to Me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in loving devotion and compassion." Hosea 2:19

7 Characteristics of the Bride of Christ

In this article, we are going to look at bible passages in the New Testament where the church is called the bride or wife of Christ. We will also look at 7 characteristics of the bride revealed in these passages of scripture.

1. Bride of Christ is holy and without blemish

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Ephesians 5:22-28

The relationship between Christ and his Bride, the Church, is likened to the relationship between a man and his wife. It is a great mystery and is one of the reasons why God honors marriage and calls us to honor it as well. Apostle Paul in the passage above says that the husband must love his

wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it. He did this to sanctify and cleanse her with the washing by his word.

The ultimate goal of Christ is to present the church (his bride) to himself as a **glorious church** without a spot or wrinkle in her garment, meaning holy and without blemish. The church here refers to all of us collectively as the body of Christ. The church can also refer to us individually because the whole is made up of its members.

The bride of Christ is subject to and seeks to please Christ her bridegroom in all matters. The bride is holy and without blemish.

2. The Bride of Christ is one with the Lord

*"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be **one flesh**. **This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church**." Ephesians 5:31-32*

Just as a man becomes one with his wife when they are joined together in marriage, the bride of Christ is also one with the Lord in the union of salvation. The covenant of salvation is likened to marriage. The bride and Christ are now one flesh. Jesus takes his covenant of union to his bride seriously, and his bride should too. "*But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." 1 Corinthians 6:17*

The implications of this oneness are immense. It means that all the Lord has is ours as his bride. It also means that the Lord will take care of us as a human husband likewise is commanded to care for his wife.

3. The Bride of Christ shall be married to him in the marriage of the Lamb

*"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the **marriage of the Lamb** is come, and his **wife hath made herself ready**. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints." Revelation 19:6-8*

The marriage of the lamb was shown to the Apostle John in his revelation. This is the actual wedding celebration God has prepared for Jesus and his bride, the church, on the final day. Jesus referred to it when he took the Last Supper with his disciples. He said, *"But I say unto you, I will*

*not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I **drink it new with you** in My Father's Kingdom (Matthew 26:29)."*

I believe Jesus was referring to the coming marriage supper of the lamb. What a glorious day that will be. Apostle John mentioned that Jesus' wife had made herself ready. She was arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints. The Lord's bride is righteous.

4. The Bride of Christ is wise and filled with the Holy Spirit

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him…And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not." Matthew 25:1-6, 10-12

In the parable of the 10 virgins, Jesus likened all professing believers to 10 virgins. He said that five were wise and five were foolish. When the bridegroom came the five foolish virgins were locked out of the marriage feast. The reason was that they did not have oil in their lamps, whereas the wise did. The oil here represents the Holy Spirit.

Every true follower of Christ should be filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our teacher that helps us obey and please Jesus. The Bible tells us that the Holy Spirit is the seal of God upon his chosen ones *(Ephesians 1:13)*. We are also told that those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God *(Romans 8:14)*. And we know we have the Holy Spirit because we do what pleases the Lord. When filled with him we produce his fruit of righteousness in us *(Galatians 5:22-23)*.

5. The Bride of Christ is faithful and devoted to him only

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." 2 Corinthians 11:2

Apostle Paul told the Corinthian church that he had espoused them as a **chaste virgin to one husband**. He mentioned this because the Corinthians had been entertaining false preachers who were preaching a false Jesus to them. Just as Paul said that he was jealous over them with godly jealousy, so does the bible tell us that God is a jealous God. His name is Jealous *(Exodus 34:14)*. Jesus cannot share his bride with another. His wife must be devoted to him and him only.

Paul in another passage terms **adulterous** those who want to be friends with the world and friends of Christ at the same time. *"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God." (James 4:4)*

The true bride of Christ will be faithful to him as a true wife is faithful to her husband.

6. The Bride of Christ looks forward to the return of Christ, her bridegroom

*"And **the Spirit and the bride say, Come**. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Revelation 22:17*

The bride of Christ longs for her bridegroom's return. She longs for the day Christ shall finally come to get her and looks forward to the marriage supper of the lamb. What bride, even an earthly one, does not long for her bridegroom when physically separated from him? You can know you are the bride of Christ because you will long for Jesus to return. "*The Spirit and the bride say, Come*!"

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Revelation 22:20

7. The Bride of Christ is the New Jerusalem

*"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband…And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, **Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife**. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God." Revelation 21:2,9,10*

The Apostle John was shown the new Jerusalem, the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. The angel that showed that great city to him, called city the bride, the Lamb's wife. I believe this is a beautiful mystery that reveals that the new Jerusalem and the bride of Christ are one. I believe that the glory and beauty of the new Jerusalem is the glory and beauty of the Lord's bride/wife.

Would you like to be the bride of Christ?

The way to become the bride of Christ is to accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross for your sins and believe in him as your Lord and Savior. When you do this Jesus becomes one with you

and his life becomes yours. Apostle John said, *"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." 1 John 4:15*

Receive him today! Repent of your sins, and ask him to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

7 Keys to Victory over the Devil's Attacks

If you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, remember that you have authority in his name over the devil's schemes and attacks. God is greater than the devil, after all, he created him and threw him out of heaven. Any power he yields, therefore, only comes through cunning and deceit. The devil is only able to attack those who open a door for him. You give him power by opening doors through sin, compromise, and rebellion against God's ways.

The spiritual world operates through legal rights. When you live in sin and rebellion against God, you automatically move yourself over to Satan's domain and he has every right to come into your life and wreak havoc through all manner of destruction. Jesus said that the devil only comes to steal, kill and destroy. Demonic attacks usually manifest in oppressions of various kinds: bondage to sin, negative patterns, blocks, disease, and all forms of oppression and depression.

Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world

Whatever you may be facing, remember that in Christ Jesus you have power over the attacks of Satan. But only if you obey God and live in subjection to his kingdom. A citizen who remains in his master's Kingdom obeying his master's rules, is safe and protected. But if he goes wandering outside the kingdom, he is open to attacks.

Jesus told us, "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and NOTHING shall by any means hurt you." Luke 10:19

We have authority in Jesus's name. In his name, we have the armies of God backing us and have nothing to fear. Your father is greater than all.

"Greater is he that is in you (JESUS), than he that is in the world (DEVIL))." Apostle John, 1 John 4:4

"Those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Elisha, 2 Kings 6:16

James 4:7-10 gives us the keys to victory over the Devil:

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned

to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up." James 4:7-10

1. Submit yourself to God

Surrendering yourself to God's rulership places you in a place of infinite protection. He is the king of kings and Lord of Lords. In Him, we have nothing to fear.

2. Resist the devil

Resist all of Satan's temptations and tricks. Remember that he uses temptation and deceit to lure you away from God's covering so that you can be vulnerable to his attacks. Resist him by refusing his advances to sin and rebel against God's ways.

3. Draw near to God

Intimacy and closeness to God through prayer and worship is a weapon against the enemy. When we draw near to God, he draws near to us. What greater place of safety is there than God himself being new to us?

4. Cleanse your hands

This signifies repentance. When we repent of our sins, the devil no longer has any claims over us.

5. Purify your heart you double-minded

Purifying our hearts signifies holiness and righteousness. Holiness is an affront to the enemy. The devil wants us to be double-minded because he knows the double-minded person cannot receive anything from God. Jesus says in *Revelations 3* that if we are lukewarm, he vomits us out of his mouth. Being single-minded, and focusing on God and his righteousness protects us from Satan's attacks.

6. Be afflicted and mourn and weep

Godly sorrow over and hatred of sin. When we mourn over our sins and the sins of the world, it reveals that we are walking in fear of God. This is a godly attitude that offers us protection from the temptations of the enemy and his attacks.

7. Humble yourself to God

Give God the glory and don't exult yourself. Humility is an act of godly submission. It is recognizing that God is the authority above us and a sign that we are depending on him. God honors humility and lifts up (delivers) those who humble themselves before him. On the contrary, he opposes the proud. The proud are easy targets for the devil.

In conclusion:

Pray, submit yourself to God, live a holy life, bless your enemies and forgive them, and then rebuke the evil spirits and they will flee from you. Our war is not with people but against evil spirits. Cover yourself with the blood of Jesus and stay under his covering through obedience and nothing can harm you.

We have victory in JESUS CHRIST'S NAME!

Take Heed to the Ministry Which You Have Received

God has a special ministry, gifts of the Holy Spirit, and also natural abilities and personality traits that He has given each of us for His purposes and glory. Ministry is God-appointed service rendered for the benefit of others and for the glory of Christ. Every Christian has a ministry.

"And say to Archippus, 'Take heed to the ministry which you have received in the Lord, that you may fulfill it.'" Colossians 4:17

Every believer is, of course, called to preach the gospel and make disciples. But there are specific ministry assignments and gifts God gives to each person to do a unique work only they can do. It's only God who knows what this is, and he will reveal it to the individual. But sometimes, mature and discerning servants of God can confirm it too. Paul was able to confirm Timothy's calling as an evangelist and apostle because he was a father to him and loved him.

"But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." 2 Timothy 4:5

"Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership." 1 Timothy 4:14

Your ministry is your unique purpose.

We are not copies of each other. God is a master designer, and we are each his masterpiece. We are created in Christ for good works, which God prepared before the foundations of the world for us. God has a book for each of us where he has written and recorded the days, thoughts, and plans he has for us and what he ordained for us to be and do. It's unique for each person.

"Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them." Psalm 139:16

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10

God places within each of us unique ministry gifts, talents, abilities, personalities, and messages that others may not have. And this is why it is important to know God and cultivate a relationship with the Holy Spirit. Only he can reveal to you what he has called you to do. If you don't hear God on this, you will often get sidetracked or misled. It will thus be easy for people and the devil to

cause people to miss their destiny. Many are kept busy doing things they were never called to do, while forsaking their actual ministry and calling in Christ.

You shall give an account for your ministry.

God shall require an account from each of us for what he committed to us. He will not ask for an account of what your pastor told you to do or what people think you should do. He will not even require an account for what you think you should do, but only for what He has called you to do. If we allow fear, insecurity, fear of man, or people's desires to keep us from fulfilling what God has called us to do, we will answer to God.

In the parable of the talents in *Matthew 25:14-30*, Jesus made it clear that one day he shall return to settle accounts with his servants. Those who multiply their talents by trading with them and putting them to use will be rewarded in the life to come with commensurate responsibilities. The servant who hid his talent in the ground because of fear and did nothing with it was banished from the Lord's presence into eternal damnation. He was called a wicked and lazy servant because he only lived for himself. He did not fulfill his ministry.

Fulfill your ministry and bear fruit.

We have not been placed here to pass the time but to fulfill the unique ministry God placed us here for. We are here to glorify him by building his kingdom where he has called us. It is the individual believer's responsibility to ask God what his unique gifts and ministry are. And once he knows, then he can fulfill his ministry without fear and without comparing and measuring himself with others. He must not allow anyone to distract and mislead him.

"Therefore, I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." 2 Timothy 1:6-7

God is glorified when we bear much fruit. We are not just to be busy, but busy doing what he has called us to do. His general will for everyone is revealed in the word of God, and we must obey that. But his specific will for our individual lives and ministry is revealed as we seek him and cultivate a relationship with him in obedience and diligence. And we shall give an account for this as well.

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." 2 Corinthians 5:10

New Testament passages on ministries and gifts of the Spirit.

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." 1 Peter 4:10-11

"God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will." Hebrews 2:4

"For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but think of yourself with sober judgment, according to the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and not all members have the same function, so in Christ we who are many are one body, and each member belongs to one another. We have different gifts according to the grace given us. If one's gift is prophecy, let him use it in proportion to his faith; if it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is giving, let him give generously; if it is leading, let him lead with diligence; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully." Romans 12:3-8

"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

"But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary." 1 Corinthians 12:20-22

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings,

helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts." 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

"And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:11-16

Go and Tell Others What He has Done!

We must always tell others what Jesus has done for us in saving us and not be ashamed or keep quiet about our testimonies because they are one of the best ways to testify for the Lord.

Sharing what God has done for you is personal, and it is REAL, and usually, it will connect with others who have been through the same thing. This is a method Jesus encouraged, the sharing of personal experience. Changed lives are one of the greatest witnesses to the power of our Lord and his gospel.

A few examples from scripture are below:

1. The man of the Gadarenes who had a legion of demons and lived naked, cutting himself in the tombs.

"And when He got into the boat, he who had been demon-possessed begged Him that he might be with Him. However, Jesus did not permit him, but said to him, "Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you." Mark 5:18-19

2. The Samaritan woman who had had 5 husbands and was living with a 6th man

"The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him." John 4:28-30

"Then they said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world." John 4:42

3. The 12 Apostles of the Lord

"And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning." John 15:27

"But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him." Acts 5:29-32

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." 2 Peter 1:16

"That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:3

4. The man born blind whom Jesus healed

"Therefore, they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?" He answered and said, "A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and I received sight." John 9:10-11

5. Apostle Peter

"And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." Luke 22:31-32

6. Apostle Paul

"For you will be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard." Acts 22:15

"But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you." Acts 26:16

7. Apostle Philip

"Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." And Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." John 1:45-46

8. King David

"I waited patiently for the Lord;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.

He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;
Many will see it and fear,
And will trust in the Lord." Psalms 40:1-3

Go and do likewise! Tell others. Don't be ashamed. Your own testimony or testimonies of the Lord's workings in your own life are a witness that he lives! Satan will try to keep you silent, but speak and hold not your peace. The more you share, the stronger your own faith gets as well.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death." Revelation 12:11

He Who Endures to the End Shall Be Saved

We are not saved once and for all; salvation is not an event. We are saved (*justification*), being saved (*sanctification*), and shall be saved (*glorification*) when we receive our resurrected bodies. Salvation has a beginning and an ending. That's why Jesus is called the author and finisher of our faith and why he asked us to endure to the end to be saved.

Work out YOUR OWN salvation with fear and trembling

We are not called to work out other people's salvation but our own (*Philippians 2:12)*. We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ alone to give an account, not with our pastors, wives, husbands, children, or closest ones. Each one shall give an account of himself and receive his own reward for what he has done in the body (*2 Corinthians 5:10*).

On that day of judgment, no one will remember the other, as each one shall be alone before his Maker. Another man's salvation will not save but your own. Church membership will not save, but one's state before God, who knows all hearts.

Paul said, "*I beat my flesh and bring it under subjection lest after preaching to others, I myself become a castaway* (*1 Corinthians 9:27).*"

He who endures to the end shall be saved.

It is not how we start beloved brethren, but how we finish. Jesus said that it is *he who ENDURES to the end that will be saved* (*Matthew 24:13)*. Many will not finish, and many will finish badly.

The end of a thing is better than the beginning (*Ecclesiastes 7:8*). Jesus said the last would be first and the last first (*Matthew 20:16)*. It's therefore not the years of our salvation that matter, but the salvation in our years.

Jesus tells us to hold fast to what we have so that no man takes our crown from us (*Revelation 3:11)*.

Now is the day of salvation

Jesus says to return to our first love and first works *(Revelation 2:4-5)*. Salvation is not a historical matter; it is a daily walk. We must pick up our crosses DAILY and follow him *(Luke 9:23)*.

NOW is the day of salvation and not yesterday (*2 Corinthians 6:2*). It is today that matters. Are we still in the faith? Paul says to examine ourselves to see if we are still in the faith (*2 Corinthians 13:5)*. He says to take heed if we think we are standing, lest we fall (*1 Corinthians 10:12)*.

We must fix our eyes on Jesus only every day (*Hebrews 12:2)* and work out our salvation with fear and trembling (*Philippians 2:12)*, remembering that our salvation has a culmination.

We are saved, being saved, and shall be saved

We are not saved once and for all, salvation is not an event. **We are saved, being saved, and shall receive our final salvation when we leave our bodies still in the faith.** The resurrection is the culmination of our salvation. We are still in the race; we have not finished yet, and so we must gird up our loins *(1 Peter 1:13)* and run with perseverance the race set before us (*Hebrews 12:1)*.

Our eyes must be fixed firmly on the hope set before us (*Hebrews 6:18)* and the end goal, which is the salvation of our souls and inheriting the kingdom of God. The future aspect of our salvation should keep us persevering.

While we are in the body we fight because we have an enemy that's determined that none of us enter that glorious city, which he will never enter again. Our enemy does not slumber, and we mustn't either.

"5 *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time…7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls*." 1 Peter 1:5, 7-9

"And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed." Romans 13:11

About the Author

Mwendwa Mbaabu is a disciple and servant of Jesus Christ, a teacher, and an author. She is the founder of Awaken the Bride of Christ Ministry and Hand of Hope Outreach.

Through her writings, Bible-based teachings, and outreach work, Mwendwa proclaims the saving gospel of Jesus Christ and helps people grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and find freedom from bondage and deception.

Formerly a backslider turned new-age author, coach, and teacher, Jesus Christ radically delivered and saved her at the age of 41 from a life of demonic bondage, deception, and eternal misery.

Jesus has delivered her from a deeply broken and sinful past littered with severe childhood trauma, years of clinical depression and suicidal ideations, alcoholism, LGBTQ and sexual bondage, spiritual abuse, church hurt, backsliding, self-destructive habits, demonization, and years of New Age spiritual deception, and given her new life in him.

Her mission is to use her past experiences and the complete freedom she has found in Christ to help others find freedom too. If he could do it for her, he can do it for anyone.

Connect with Mwendwa:

Website: mwendwambaabu.com
Email: mwendwacoaching@gmail.com
Instagram: @mwendwambaabu
Facebook: facebook.com/belovedmbaabu